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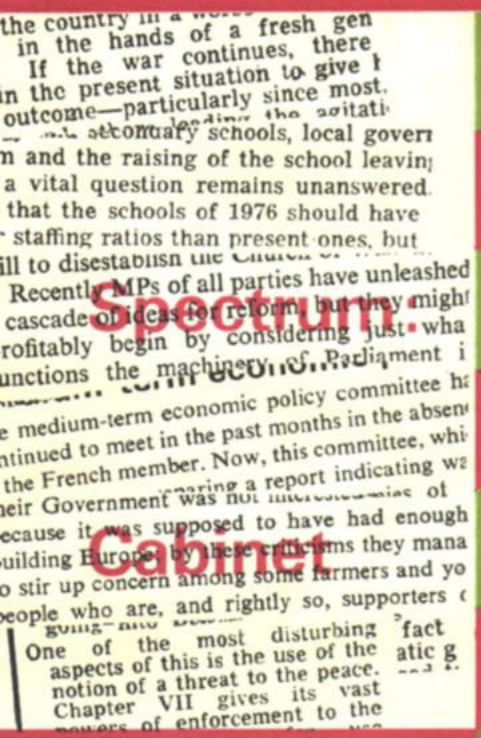
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Cabinet

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Students **Noël Annan**

Reform **A J Ayer**

Economics **Andrew Shonfield**

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The Press

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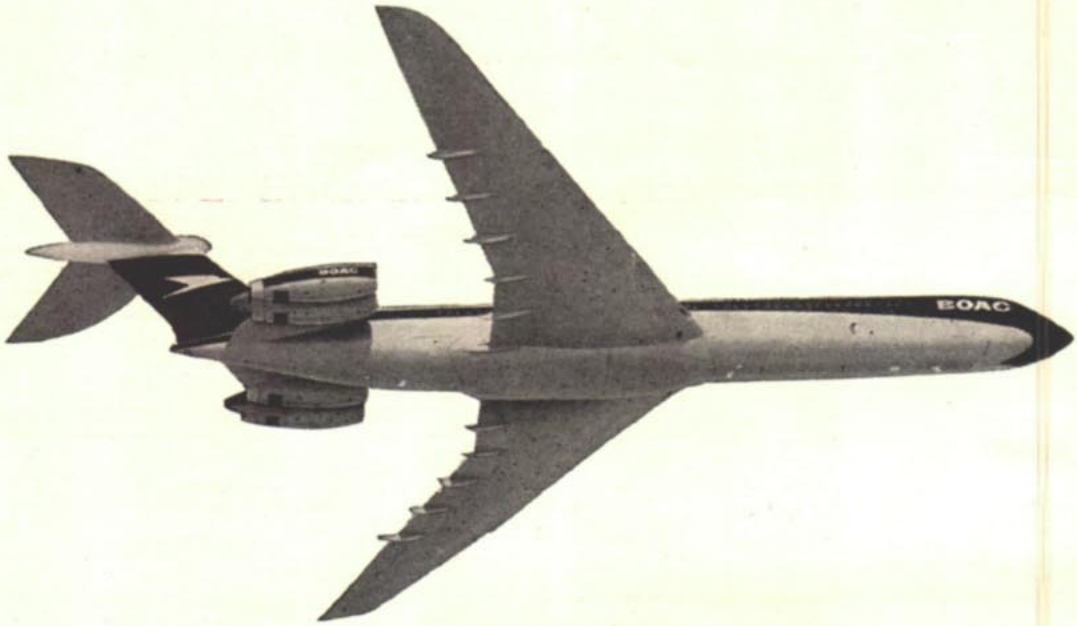

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Encounter

JUNE 1966
VOL. XXVI NO. 6

Edited by FRANK KERMODE *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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Published monthly at 25 Haymarket London SW1. 4s. a copy (USA & Canada 75c. India Rs. 1.50). Postage: 7d. Annual subscription (inc. postage): 50s: USA & Canada $8.50: India Rs. 18. Six months: 27s.: $4.50: Rs. 11. Subscription & Trade department: Rolls House Publishing Co. Ltd. Breams Buildings London EC4 (Holborn 5708). US & Canadian subscriptions: British Publications Inc. 30 East 60th Street New York NY 10022. US newsstand distribution by Gordon & Gotch (USA) Inc. 585 Fifth Avenue, New York 17 (MU 7-2645). Binders (for six copies) available from 25 Haymarket SW1, 13s. or $2.00 each. © *1966 by Encounter Ltd.*

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Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet

The mild cigar from Benson & Hedges

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Spectrum

Europe

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO in a similar ENCOUNTER *Spectrum* I wrote that Britain's modernisation seemed to be something of a *fait accompli* and that it was time to be thinking once again about values. In April 1966 it appears that this was speaking too soon, being hopelessly optimistic in fact. The first Wilson government has passed by without any answer to the immediate economic questions that have harassed us since the war. The balance of payments crisis is still hovering in the background, quiescent for the moment, but always putting a brake on the possibilities of economic expansion. Investment in new industrial plant and new methods is still falling behind that of other European countries; so are our standard of living and the benefits of our welfare services. The dilemma of commitments east of Suez has not been solved: we are still torn between legitimate and (in terms of the Anglo-American alliance) essential commitments in the Indian Ocean and the desire to stop the drain on our resources which they represent. Mr. George Brown has done something to hustle the trade unions into the 20th century, but he has hardly done enough.

Things, we are told, will be different with a government supported by a majority of nearly a hundred in the House of Commons. Things will have to be different if Mr. Wilson and his colleagues are to make a success of their second term of office. In the coming years there will be no place for half-measures, for there will be no excuse for failure to act in time or to discard ministers who show themselves unequal to their tasks. What has now to be done is not just a question of "saving the pound." That is a negative achievement and one which, many would say, has been given too great a priority in the past. What is urgent is to start Britain's economy on the upward path. Mr. Wilson has all the political freedom of manoeuvre he needs. If he does not use it rightly, then he will have missed an historic opportunity, and history—not to mention the British electorate—will hardly forgive him.

It is hard to think that so urgent a problem will not compel action. But will it be the right action? What has been disappointing about the last year-and-a-half is the extent to which day-to-day measures against a short-term emergency have made us lose sight of the real remedies for our ills. Surcharges on imports may help to reduce the balance of payments deficit, but are a soporific for an economy that needs waking up. A fuel policy that favours home-produced coal (or the National Union of Mineworkers) raises the costs of industry without doing much to stem the tide that is running so strongly in favour of other forms of power. Mr. Brown with his incomes policy has made a gallant effort to keep prices and wages down, but if he fails to hold those hastily improvised entrenchments, the only alternative will be a much harsher form of deflation than Britain has known since the war. And trade unionists might usefully reflect on whether they prefer a compulsory early-warning system or unem-

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ployment. They may well find themselves rejecting the one and getting both.

These are the kind of anomalies which were, no doubt, hard to resolve on a majority of three and with an election not more than a year away. Now Mr. Wilson is free to resolve them as he pleases, to do what is necessary even if it hurts (and we should be deceiving ourselves if we think that it will not hurt). And because the government's economic policies will be closely watched by our creditors abroad, because there are powerful incentives for any British administration to get the country out of its present impasse before new elections begin to cast their shadow, it will be the next two years that will be crucial. Britain's present economic position has one great advantage: it is far too vulnerable to be left to drift. "Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." Mr. Wilson and his ministers will have their minds concentrated on the national economy over the next months. That is their and the country's best chance. They should think and act to some purpose now that they have the power. Nor should they be distracted from this main issue by peripheral problems such as Rhodesia. Mr. Macmillan wasted time over Cyprus that he could ill afford and never recovered.

THE ONLY ACT of foreign policy that can help us towards a less constricted future is the settlement of our relations with the European Economic Community. Here, as in other respects, the election campaign has obscured the issues. The Conservatives have at times seemed to be accepting the Gaullist version of "a non-Atlantic Europe," while simultaneously calling for "integration" which Gaullists would reject. Labour spokesmen have rejected political ties and repeated *ad nauseam* that Britain must not "crawl" into Europe, but does anyone seriously imagine that our future negotiating position will be a strong one, unless we are prepared to show Europeans that we accept all the political as well as economic implications of entry? It is really time that our political parties should agree that membership in the European Economic Community means an increase in economic potential and political power and leave arguing about tactics to later. No doubt, entry into Europe will always be a difficult and delicate exercise—perhaps an impossibly difficult one as long as President de Gaulle is in the Elysée—but there could at least be agreement as to the direction in which Britain's interests lie and an end, on the government's part, to the striking of attitudes which can only shackle it later. Europe is the other major issue on which Mr. Wilson will be judged. Since the Conservative Party came out of the election in a better posture as regards Europe than the Labour Party, he must certainly be tempted to steal his opponents' clothes. To take Britain into Europe would remove the main plank in Mr. Heath's platform—one that is the Conservative leader's chosen stamping-ground. But to do this the Prime Minister will have to rid himself of a number of fears and prejudices which have recently been expressed in his speeches and (perhaps more revealingly) in impromptu answers to hecklers. He will also have to drop some members of his government. For it is no good thinking that Britain can go into Europe half-heartedly, with backward glances at the splendid isolation of the 19th century or nostalgia for the stirring days of 1940. The commitment must be accomplished by a realisation that this is a new direction in British history and a determination that some consequences at least must be damned.

What other directions are there to choose? The Commonwealth? In the last eighteen months it has dissolved even faster than the most pessimistic observers would have predicted. A "strengthening of Commonwealth ties" or an "increase in Commonwealth trade" stand revealed once again for the chimeras they have been for more than thirty years, ever since the Ottawa conference. Partnership with America in "peace-keeping" east of Suez? How long will this transitional role (or American interest in it) last and how many people in Britain would wish to persist in it if it meant either an involvement in large-scale military operations or the acceptance of a lower standard of living to meet the cost? It appears likely that, by 1970, British commitments in the Indian Ocean will have been slashed far beyond the cuts already made in Mr. Healey's defence review. The purchase of the *F-III* strike aircraft (which can be used in Europe) and the decision not to construct a new aircraft carrier (which can only be used east of Suez) are already steps in this direction. In any case, such residual operations as seem necessary in terms of western interests could be carried out far better by a country which had improved its economic and political position in Europe.

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THE TWO TASKS which Mr. Wilson's government now has before it: the improvement of Britain's economy and entry, if possible, into the Common Market, are closely linked. Put together they add up to securing one's home base before undertaking more far-flung obligations or indulging in the luxury of expensive global policies. No doubt, a government that makes them its first priorities will be attacked on the grounds of being "inward-looking." But at this moment Britain could do with some solid attention to its own troubles, and it is perhaps inevitable that we should live through a recuperative period of withdrawal from extra-European responsibilities before returning strengthened to play a more effective part in the world at large.

The last year-and-a-half has been something of a moment of truth both for Britain and for the Labour Party. It has demonstrated very clearly just how little freedom of manoeuvre a British government has—and that it is not sufficient to put another party in power to initiate new policies when the old ones were dictated by harsh circumstance. If Mr. Wilson is to gain what he sometimes calls in his homely way, "more elbow-room," he will have to succeed in what he always calls "getting the priorities right": the Economy and Europe. If he does this, then he will have achieved his ambition of making the Labour Party the "natural party of government." If he does not, then it will soon be brought home to the average British voter just how fragile are the foundations on which his prosperity is based. Personally I still believe what I have written before. That the only (and thus also the easiest) way for us lies into Europe. That there is no alternative to a European policy accompanying a determination to set our economy in order. That these two aspects of recovery are indivisible. That other political tasks and alignments will be evils if they distract us from this urgent necessity. Provided that Mr. Wilson's new government acts with decision in this sense, then he may well gain the historic stature which he so plainly covets. If not then he will not be the only one to be diminished. But could it be that in ten years the Prime Minister will have survived the now reigning Chancellors, Generals, and Presidents to become the leader of a new Europe and the elder statesman of the West?

Anthony Hartley

Arms & Men

DENIS HEALEY is back at the Ministry of Defence and with any luck should stay there for the rest of this decade; for long enough, that is, to set a stamp on our Armed Forces compared with which Haldane's will look like a washed-out laundry-mark. The example of Haldane, and of Cardwell, suggests that Radical administrations usually provide the best Defence Ministers. They are not afraid of asking disagreeable questions; they do not hold the Armed Forces in awe; their judgment is not fogged by attachment to sacred cows; and they get on unexpectedly well with senior officers who, brought up to expect leadership, expertise and decisiveness, accept it gladly from whatever quarter it comes. Certainly a number of able Conservative Ministers preceded Mr. Healey, but the number was far too large. On the rare occasions when a course was set, it did not stay set for long. Lacking firm guidance from the top, the Services were able to go their divergent and shatteringly expensive ways. The Healey Reforms, like the Haldane and the Cardwell Reforms, come after fifteen years of spasmodic tinkering. Now we can really get going.

A good start has already been made on the co-ordination and rationalising of the Services and the costing of their programmes. There has also been a most spectacular butchery of sacred cows. The slaughter of the *TSR 2*, the abandonment of the large-carrier programme, and the projected evacuation of the Aden base have shown that each of the Services is prepared to make substantial sacrifices in the interests of the national economy. Then there was that most sacred animal of all, the Territorial Army. The prolonged reluctance of the Conservatives to handle this antiquated quadruped left Healey with an urgent problem which he could, to put it mildly, have dealt with more tactfully. But drastic reform was long, long overdue, and he may have calculated that, since a storm of protest was inevitable whatever he did, he might as well have his money's worth.

But on this question of our Auxiliary Forces, Mr. Healey does not seem to have pondered

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with his usual intellectual acumen. Links between our small professional forces and the rest of our urbanised and sophisticated community are not going to be easy to maintain. The long-term prospects for recruiting are not good. There are problems within our society which the restriction of the outlets provided by the T.A. will not make it easier to solve. All these fringe benefits of the old structure add up to a substantial bonus which it will not be easy to recreate, and there is little evidence that the Ministry of Defence has considered how, if at all, it is going to recreate it. With a Labour majority of nearly a hundred, many of them strongly impregnated with good old-fashioned anti-militarism, the chances of doing anything of the kind are not bright. As a result, although Mr. Healey may transform the Services, making them economical, integrated and thoroughly efficient, he may find it increasingly hard to get anyone to join them.

IN DEFENCE ORGANISATION Healey can certainly be trusted to pursue a thoroughly radical policy, and to see through to completion a number of measures essential to the maintenance of effective armed forces within the limits imposed by our economic circumstances. But in defence *policy,* on the other hand, he is likely to remain solidly conservative; and here the Conservatives, paradoxically enough, might have been, and might yet be, more radical than he. To the basic question, "On what does the security of this country ultimately depend?", Mr. Healey and his colleagues staunchly reply "The Alliance." It was their predecessors of the Attlee administration who created the alliance, persuading the United States to cast their economic and military mantle over the exposed nations of Western Europe. The extent to which the economic vulnerability of a Labour administration makes it particularly sensitive to the pressures of Washington is not a matter about which I am qualified to write. But there can be little doubt that the desire to prove good allies is likely to continue to weigh more heavily with this Administration than the need to placate restive back-benchers, and that the deployment and structure of British forces will still be devised to fit into the needs of a system whose centre of gravity and ultimate control lies in the United States.

For this reason, Mr. Healey is not likely to force any radical redeployment of our forces in Europe, though commonsense and economy cry alike to heaven for drastic action. France has caused trouble enough, and this is no moment for a loyal ally to join in rocking the boat. For this reason also, and not from any Imperialist nostalgia, we will retain "a presence" in the Indian Ocean. By showing our willingness to play our part in world peace-keeping we gain a voice in the councils of the Alliance —or so it is hoped—denied to our wealthier and more selfish European neighbours. The decision to abandon Aden, though unwelcome, is acceptable to Washington so long as we retain some "peace-keeping" capacity in the area; and the Americans will help out, not only with *F-111s* on favourable terms but with facilities of various kinds in our island staging-posts. If we leave Singapore, American aid is equally likely to be forthcoming to enable us to preserve a Far Eastern "presence" from the Australian mainland. It is a part of the world where the Americans are desperately anxious not to be left alone.

Given this policy of *Bündnistreue,* Mr. Healey cannot take the easy way out urged by his colleagues of the Left and reduce defence expenditure by cutting commitments. He can only seek more ways of covering the same amount of bread with a pat of butter rapidly dwindling as the growth of weapon and manpower costs soars inexorably beyond that of the national income. There is a limit to what even his ingenuity will do, and by the end of the decade he may be in serious trouble, unable either to recruit his Armed Forces or equip them on the scale their tasks demand. And the trouble may by then be compounded by the attacks of opponents armed with a coherent alternative policy: one long urged by the Liberals and not wholly unwelcome to a substantial element on his own back-benches.

THE CONSERVATIVES have always been restive within the Alliance, once it dawned on them that Britain was no longer a senior partner. For them, the security of Britain has traditionally lain in her Strong Right Arm—the Royal Navy, Bomber Command, and now the Independent Deterrent. The Americans, powerful and friendly as they may be, are in their eyes foreigners and trade rivals who cannot be relied upon to defend British interests when they conflict with their own. This restiveness was kept under control so long as Conservative policy was guided by survivors from the wartime Grand Alliance who could sur-

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round our dependence with an aura of equality. But with the disappearance of the last of the line, Mr. Harold Macmillan, a harsher note has been making itself heard. The name of de Gaulle is spoken in Conservative circles with respect—even with envy. We have as Leader of the Opposition a man whose interest in the world East of Suez is not immediately evident, and as Shadow Defence Secretary one who has washed his hands of it very publicly. The election drastically pruned the party of those members whose faces were more firmly set towards our Imperial past, and Mr. Heath's followers are now likely to follow his lead "into Europe" without bothering too much about the cost.

And what indeed would the cost be? Not all of the £300 million which we spend annually East of Suez could be reinvested elsewhere, but its saving would change the dimensions of our economic predicament. Is it really sound policy for this country to plunge repeatedly into debt in order to please the Americans by remaining a world-power? If we were to abandon not only our overseas bases but all attempt to keep up "peace-keeping forces" as well, except on a Canadian or Swedish scale; if we reduced our armed forces to the size needed to make an effective contribution to the defence of a Europe which has not seriously expected a Russian attack for nearly fifteen years; would our quest for an "independent deterrent" then be totally vain? And if a British nuclear force still proved economically non-viable, would not a European weapons-system be feasible at acceptable cost? Would not this be a better way of spending our money than fighting other people's wars for them in the Radfan and Borneo, or maintaining a capacity for military intervention in the developing world which, however well-meant, is almost bound to be misunderstood?

It is not inconceivable that the Conservatives, during their sojourn in the wilderness, will adopt and elaborate such ideas as these. There are excellent arguments against all of them; but at least their appearance as official Opposition doctrine would mean that defence debates might be something more than the arid squabbling about the cost of aircraft into which they have degenerated during the last eighteen months; and that we might at last have that Great National Debate about "Britain's place in the world" which, as the Prime Minister reminded us before the election, is long overdue.

Michael Howard

Stop-Go Dilemma

A FAVOURITE DICTUM of Harold Wilson's when he was an Opposition Leader was concerned with the proper way to treat the economic difficulties he felt quite certain he would meet on taking office. It is a mistake to let yourself get too absorbed in the details of the first crisis, he would say. Do whatever unpleasant things are necessary to get out of it (naming the orthodox deflationary moves) and concentrate your energies on avoiding the crisis after that one. I am not sure those were the exact words he used, but the essential message was: think about the strategy—let the tactics take care of themselves.

In fact during Labour's first eighteen months in office the strategy and the tactics have often got mixed up with one another—as witness, for example, the series of sudden alarms and excursions over the government's incomes policy. In the place of the slow, and necessarily unspectacular, build-up of productivity and wage agreements industry by industry, it was felt to be necessary to use the policy in a hurry, as a declamatory device with which to impress foreign bankers.[1] So the real conformation of Labour's economic policies to date has not always been easy to discern. But assuming that the Government can now afford more clarity and consistency in the pursuit of strategic objectives, I would select three of them as having special priority.

[1] For example Charles Coombs, Vice-President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, has since explained how the crucial decision to support sterling in the autumn of 1965 followed on Mr. Brown's move to put legislative sanctions behind the incomes policy: "This new operation [of sterling support] was based upon a policy decision of the British Government to take determined action to arrest the inflationary trend of prices and wages.... Announcement on September 1 of the British Government's intention to seek parliamentary authorisation of new powers to deal with the wage-price spiral had in fact brought an immediate improvement in market sentiment...." (*Monthly Review*, Federal Reserve Bank, New York, March 1966).

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1. The first is to put the relationship between government and private enterprise firmly on a basis which recognises that bargains can be struck between the two, which satisfy both the public interest and the pursuit of private profit. On the one side government will intervene more actively to assert how the public interest can be served by changes in the structure of industrial ownership and management. The other term of this relationship is confidence on the part of private industry that any such changes are going to be pressed in the interests of higher efficiency and not as part of a larger plot by the state to take over its property—i.e. there has to be a repudiation of Clause IV of the Labour Party programme. Labour has in fact already achieved some impressive progress in establishing the new relationship between government and industry. It has become clearer than ever that this is, in fact, a pre-condition for effective planning in a mixed economy. No doubt it will be subjected to some awkward strains when steel comes to be nationalised. The next test of the Government's skill, and also of the clarity of its long-term purpose, will be its ability to convince British industrialists—among whom there are many who are by no means ill-disposed towards it—that this act of nationalisation is merely a left-over, the tail-end of an earlier programme designed for another era, and not the start of a new series of industrial take-overs by the state.

2. The second objective is to secure a decisive rise in the output of the average British worker. 1965 was a deplorable year in this respect: in conditions which were quite favourable, productivity in British industry rose by an abnormally small amount. If it had gone up normally, the Government's restrictive measures would surely have meant that a lot more people would have been unemployed by early 1966—with the result perhaps that it might not have won a walk-over election. The delayed reaction of the economic system was politically decisive. This means that there is a rise in unemploment still to come. Will it be accompanied by the usual downturn in industrial investment? If it is, then the Wilson idea of keeping the tactics for dealing with his first crisis quite separate from his long-term strategy will have gone badly astray. For a further big shift of British resources into investment is the key to higher productivity in the long run.

The years in which Britain has consistently invested much less in modern industry than her Continental rivals (most notably Germany) have begun to tell. It is not just a matter of catching up with them—and we are still some way from that—there is also a lag of several years to be made up. It is a plainly visible lag on the roads and in the ports; it is also there, if less visibly, in the factories.

THE DANGER IS that a fall in factory investment may be altogether too welcome to the Government in 1966–7, because it would bring disproportionate relief to the balance of payments. One reason for that is that so much of the new machinery installed in British factories comes from abroad. The claim that Labour has discovered a different way of dealing with the *stop-go* cycle in the British economy will be judged by its capacity to resist the temptation of securing quick relief in this way. One of the silliest assertions of the General Election campaign was that Labour had shown how to take the "stop" out of *stop-go*. All that has happened is that the processes of deflation which the Government set in motion in 1965 have been working their way through the economy more slowly than usual. One can only hope that the economists in the Government do not believe the propaganda put out by the Government's economic spokesmen. Because if they do believe it, the likelihood is that they will be too slow on the draw to prevent the impending downturn in business investment. The instrument of prevention is ready to hand: it is the new system of cash grants for investment in industry. But the first payments are due to be made only in eighteen months time. If the Government is in earnest about investment it will have to act faster than that.

It will be interesting to see whether a Labour Government, equipped with an assured majority, will be willing to spell out the practical meaning, in terms of people's incomes, of the required shift to a higher level of national investment. It means that for a period of a few years what people consume must increase by significantly less than what they produce. To secure this discrepancy between production and consumption is the chief aim of a national incomes policy. It is not just a matter of "holding down prices"; indeed the curb on prices during the year 1965, while wages continued to go up fast, probably meant that consumption reached

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a *higher* level than it would have done without an incomes policy. Profits have been squeezed in consequence. It will be the awkward task of the Labour Government, if it cares about business investment, to sell the notion to its followers that profits ought to be encouraged to rise faster than wages during the period ahead.

3. THE THIRD MAJOR OBJECTIVE of economic policy should be to create a defensive shield against the shocks and pressures from abroad, behind which Britain can build up its productive power. The first eighteen months of Labour rule have shown once again how vulnerable British economic plans are to changes in the state of confidence about sterling in foreign exchange markets, and how dependent the country is on the good offices of foreign central bankers. What the experience ought also to have suggested to the Labour leadership is that it is nonsense to believe that Britain would somehow be more subject to the "whims of foreigners" inside the European Common Market than outside it. The basic trouble from which Britain suffers at present is the additional exposure to the risks that come from running the pound sterling as an international currency. But even without these, the present weakness of the balance of payments—and its probable future weakness, if as is to be hoped the Labour Government sets out to achieve a sharp rise in investment at home—would create a problem.

The alternatives which present themselves to a country in this condition are familiar, though some are supposed to be barely mentionable. A devaluation of the currency is the most obvious device; combined with a restriction of consumer demand at home, it would give a decisive fillip to British exports by making them cheaper. This advantage might well be combined with an inrush of foreign capital, because investment in British assets would suddenly present a highly attractive bargain to anyone with spare funds abroad. To some extent the existing arrangement of a combined import surcharge and export subsidy are an *Ersatz* devaluation. If some more enduring device can be found for lowering the prices of our exports and raising the cost of imports, the external shield will be reinforced.

But the protection will be inadequate unless something similar is done to stimulate the inflow of foreign capital and to restrict the outflow of British capital abroad. Best of all would be a big long-term loan from a number of friendly governments. But whether such extra foreign capital is forthcoming or not, Britain certainly needs a comprehensive system of exchange control in order to reduce the export of British capital to a bare minimum. This has already been partially achieved by the Labour Government's 1965 measures to restrict investment in all non-sterling countries. But the big hole in the exchange control system is the sterling area.

The free movement of money between Britain and the rest of the sterling area is regarded as an essential element in the sterling system. And the sterling system tends also to be regarded, by at least one section of the Labour Cabinet, as a crucial prop of the Commonwealth. The fact that three important members of the sterling area are Ireland, South Africa, and Kuwait may make the Commonwealth connection seem a little bizarre. But behind it there is the larger legend that the pound sterling as an international currency belongs to the substance of Britain's great role in the world. It is the equivalent in the economic sphere of Britain's military commitment east of Suez. To surrender either for the sake of the relief that this would bring to the British balance of payments is a proposal which Mr. Wilson, on past form, seems unlikely to accept at all readily.

IT MAY BE THEREFORE, that, for all the brave intention of sitting out the first balance of payments crisis and not letting it interfere with the making of Labour's long-term policy, it will prove to be impossible to escape from the sustained pressure of short-term imperatives. The lingering economic crisis would then gradually take precedence over everything else. My own view is that it is improbable that Britain, whether governed by a Labour or a Conservative administration, will be able to get away from the short-term compulsions of the defence of sterling—the ultimate source of *stop-go*—without a major act of conscious self-liberation. If we mustn't devalue, and must keep the sterling area, and have to stay east of Suez—it is hard to see where the liberating is to begin.

Andrew Shonfield

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End of an Elite?

THE BRITISH and American educational systems have been for so long opposed that to move from one system to the other was like climbing through the Looking-Glass. Today they are moving closer. The American Alice is discovering meritocracy, and the British Alice is beginning to grope towards the land of egalitarianism. Both are puzzled by the problem of finding remedies for the defects in their own systems.

The American system is dedicated to equality of opportunity. It used not to be concerned primarily with academic achievement. To Europeans it seemed to put other things first. The children (especially of immigrant parents) were taught to be "good Americans"; or trained to "adjust" to their peer-group; or the school set out to make them "happy." The underpaid teachers, lacking status in the community, were trained in "teaching methods," but in many cases knew too little of the subjects they were supposed to teach. Equality of opportunity was confused with equality of achievement. It was thought to be undemocratic to differentiate between the clever and the stupid. The not-so-bright moved as easily as the clever up the staircase of grades in order that no child should be disappointed or feel rejected. As a result the low academic standards of all but a few high schools (*e.g.*, Highland Park or Boston Latin) became a by-word, and students at the American university spent their first two years acquiring the general education they should have got at school. Then in the 1950s (the "post-*sputnik* period") things began to change. Selective high schools and junior colleges multiplied; streaming became more intense; more parents were prepared to spend money on private school fees. High schools in the suburbs flourished; those in the cities slumped. The slum child was taught in classes double the size of the suburban and $500 a year was spent on him as compared with $1,500. So intense is the competition to get one's child to the best school that the ideal of equal opportunity is more than a little tarnished. Christopher Jencks described it recently as the equal opportunity of everyone to end up as a street cleaner. But for all that, only the bottom fifteen per cent of children go into the ghetto of the technical school or just quit being educated. The vast majority go on to high school, nearly fifty per cent of them getting after that some sort of higher education; and even those who flunk out have spread beneath them the vast net waiting to give them a second chance at night schools and State and City Colleges who are willing to enrol them at a later age.

The British system was the very reverse. Streaming began early. Until the 1960s, seventy per cent of children went to secondary modern schools which they left at fifteen. The triumphant (overwhelmingly middle class) minority went at eleven plus to grammar and direct grant schools. There they competed with those in the public schools to be among the four per cent who were selected to go to universities. Intense specialisation even before the sixth form enabled the universities to run a three-year first degree course. The *élite* who survived prospered. But it was inconvenient to ask what had happened to those who at different ages in adolescence were weeded out by the system and had been submerged. Practically their only lifelines were the Techs, the Colleges of Education, and day- or block-release schemes in industry. Then, at last, reason began to dawn. The work of David Glass, Michael Young, Brian Jackson, and dozens of patient investigators of the educational system began to be understood. The explosion in higher education occurred; the campaign for comprehensive education got under way; and streaming began to be attacked. People began to see that egalitarianism was not only just: it might also be more efficient.

IN THIS MOVE across the board the Americans have the easier task. It is easier to raise standards in a democratic system than to democratise a segregated system and at the same time preserve standards. But both face the same problems. Can the clever child be allowed to get ahead without condemning the average or the backward child to being taught by the worse teachers and made to feel inferior? And must the peck order in schools depend on the neighbourhood they're in so that working-class children who need *more* opportunity get sent to the *least* favoured schools while middle-class children continue to be educated together? Comprehensive schools will not solve this problem. What will happen, as in the United States,

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Life & Letters Today (HUSTINGS)

Liverpool

IT IS *the measure of Mr. Heath's accomplishment in the art of old-speak that he does not, as Mr. Wilson does, descend to the stratagem of pretending he had thought of the words himself. They come unsullied, straight from the Smith Square speech computer.*

Nothing is first that is not also foremost.

Nothing is without fear that is not equally without favour.

No plans are other than far-reaching, no place other than the forefront.

There is no kith without kin.

He did once speak of "the spur that will lead us onwards." I offer him now the carrot that will hold us back.

If we are to have a contest of clichés, then it is time we had some new clichés.

EVENING STANDARD

Washington

PRESIDENT *Johnson has lately been using "Hansard" for bedside reading—and has apparently appreciated Mr. Harold Wilson's skill so much that he has taken to repeating snatches of his repartee to members of the White House staff.* THE OBSERVER

London

"I THINK *we've been a very pragmatic government. We shall remain a pragmatic government.*"—H. Wilson, Election Forum, BBC TV, March 10.

Pragmatic: 1. Relating to the affairs of a state or community. 2. Busy, active; esp. officiously busy in other people's affairs; interfering, meddling. 3. Opinionated, dictatorial, dogmatic.—Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

THE SPECTATOR

London

AT HIS *afternoon post-mortem Press conference Mr. Edward Heath was in such sparkling form that I got the impression he might have mistimed his training. He reached his peak in his interview with Robin Day afterwards. And Robin Day reached his own preposterous peak when interviewing new Labour M.P.s as portentously as Dr. Arnold interviewing Tom Brown.* THE OBSERVER

Birmingham

CAMPAIGNING *with Mr. George Brown is like travelling in a new road version of "The Messiah," scored by a dervish, marked double forte throughout and performed at a pace that would have left Sir Thomas Beecham himself gasping in defeat.* THE GUARDIAN

Launceston

THIS *is a matter-of-fact age. Few politicians now make a point of repeating that statistics are worse than "damned lies." Every young Conservative or Socialist these days has a Minister's slide rule in his knapsack.* THE TIMES

London

"I HAVE NEVER *voted in a parliamentary election," the late Evelyn Waugh wrote in a comment for a weekly journal on the general elections. "I do not aspire to advise my Sovereign in her choice of servants." No other contemporary figure would have been capable of a comic line of that stature.* THE GUARDIAN

London

THE TROUBLE *is—and this is what seems to have got Mr. George Brown's goat—that television cameras with all their lighting and apparatus are not unobtrusive witnesses of the events they are present at. They exert an influence on these events. They do more than observe, they take part. If there is confusion they can add to it, disorder and they can magnify it, excitement and they can stoke it. Scientists are familiar with this phenomenon. In an article about Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which lies behind quantum physics, the Encyclopaedia Britannica writes: "In making observations on the system, it is necessary to exchange energy and momentum with it. This exchange of necessity spoils the original properties of the system." In rather the same way television cameras exchange energy and momentum with the meetings of which they are supposedly passive observers, and although they may not necessarily spoil the meeting (they may sometimes manage to bring it to life) they will almost certainly modify it for better or worse.* THE TIMES

London

EVERYONE *must have his own explanation of what happened [writes Leonard Beaton of the Tory defeat]. In the course of the 1950s a radical critique of the entire political structure of Britain was developed. The thesis was very broad and far-reaching: management was incompetent, the country could only emerge from its class sorrows by extreme measures, the Commonwealth was an expensive irrelevance, the whole constitutional fabric was in need of repair. Those who accepted this broad thesis began with despair and ended with a vision of Europe as the only salvation. Little by little the Conservative Party accepted this critique. It ceased to believe that its years had been good years, and thus surrendered intellectually. The clever Tory commentators seemed to think that the electorate had been schooled on* ENCOUNTER.

THE GUARDIAN

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is that some schools in "good" neighbourhoods will be the meritocratic places nearly as much as are today the grammar schools, where entry is by 11-plus achievement, or the public schools where entry is by cheque-book. Indeed, many comprehensive schemes (the Leicestershire Scheme, or the two-tier senior high school, or even the sixth form college) merely postpone the age of selection for two or three or five years after 11-plus. Such schemes are compromises which have been made inevitable by obsolescent school buildings designed to perpetuate segregation.

Nevertheless, comprehension will help, and it is to Labour's credit that once they gained power they were out to kill the 11-plus. 1066 used to be a notable date in English history but during the Election the figures became known as the infamous or enlightened (according to your politics) circular which Mr. Crosland has issued to local authorities. The circular in fact merely laid down the principles that in new housing estates and in country areas only comprehensive schools were to be built—rather as before the American Civil War the Abolitionists tried to ensure that slavery should be prohibited from spreading as an institution into the new States of the Union. Mr. Crosland has produced no Education Act with which his name will be linked. He cannot produce the egalitarian revolution overnight. But his reign in Curzon Street marks the acceptance of a new principle in British education. In retrospect the Butler Act of 1944, so far from being a new deal, seems now to be the final stage of the consciously inegalitarian educational system bequeathed by the Victorians.

Raising the school leaving age from fifteen to sixteen; increasing the opportunities of day- and block-release in industry; planning a University of the Air (which is a correspondence-course degree structured upon TV courses and an attempt to give university education to those who have been segregated out of higher education)—all these are instances of the present Government's drive to do more for the mass of children instead of concentrating on the *élite*. Where Mr. Crosland appears to contradict this principle is in higher education, and his supporters have been attacking indignantly his binary system which appears to dig an inviolable moat between the self-governing Universities and the inferior institutions such as the Techs and the Colleges of Education which are governed by the local authorities. Yet paradoxically this system, too, may spring from the desire to see that the under-privileged institutions do not lose out to the universities in financial support and administrative drive. Whereas the universities go their own way under the remote guidance of the University Grants Committee, the Department of Education itself will set up new institutions, conduct experiments, and try to raise the standards and status of the non-autonomous institutions. But the truth is that just as we do not know how to eliminate social divisiveness in the schools, we haven't begun to work out how the various kinds of higher education should be related. Those who criticise the binary system have a case. But they haven't shown how to avoid treating the Colleges and Techs as the poor relations of the universities, or how far the Department of Education should abdicate its power to influence higher education.

Two FACTORS put the drag on the move towards egalitarianism. The first is lack of money. After decades of neglect, the cost of rebuilding the vast number of deplorable primary schools—let alone finding the capital cost of turning segregated into comprehensive secondary education—is enormous; and on top of that there is the explosion in higher education to finance. That is why those who have Education at heart become interested in Defence. Yet every time there is a cut in Defence commitments there appears to be compensating expenditure. We abandon Aden and reinforce the Persian Gulf. We save £20 million in abolishing the Territorial Army but then retain a local defence force ready to spring into action... when? Is the moral and financial price of being a client state of America too high?

The second factor is the attitude of intellectuals. Most intellectuals, even the radicals, are *élitists*. Yes, they wish the other seventy per cent well and want them to have happy and better schools; but having nearly all themselves come up by way of the grammar or public schools to the university, they are too aware of the value of sixth-form teaching or of tutorials and all the benefits of smaller classes not to be disturbed by egalitarianism. They discover innumerable reasons why it would be premature to move towards it *now*. Precisely because they understand the value of rigorous thinking and the need to discipline the mind, they suspect any changes in the traditional methods of promoting rigour and discipline. Honouring the

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time-honoured is a professional instinct. If a contest were held to discover which was the most conservative-minded profession in Britain, the competition would be intense—and at times the Teachers would not be far behind the Lawyers. Whether it is opposition to employing auxiliaries in primary schools, or reluctance to modify sixth-form specialisation so that children do not drop mathematics at fifteen, or determination to make, say, the C.N.N.A. degree in the Techs as "respectable" as a university engineering degree, the good impulses to maintain standards behind all such moves are at war with other good motives to produce a more just educational system.

There aren't solutions to these problems. The only hope is that variety in education should be recognised, more than it is at present, as a good in itself. We need variety in institutions, curricula, and aims; we need more ladders to help the victims of our social system, and a greater willingness to recognise different kinds of academic ability. Heaven has many mansions, and they are not all reached by Modern Greats.

Noël Annan

Humanism & Reform

THE HUMANIST MOVEMENT is gradually changing its character. Until quite recently its energies were mainly absorbed in a kind of religious war against the churches. This war, in which only the humanists themselves took any great interest, was waged by them on two fronts. They set out, on the one hand, to expose the absurdities of Christian theology and, on the other, to demonstrate historically that religious belief in general had been a source of more misery than happiness, and especially that the churches, as political and social forces, were an obstacle to human enlightenment and progress.

There are various reasons why these aims no longer seem so important. Theological questions have ceased to excite the interest which they did in the 19th century. There are no new arguments: at the most, an occasional attempt, on the Christian side, to find a new way to reconcile religion with science (a long-cherished hope which accounts for the exaggerated attention which is still being paid to the speculations of Teilhard de Chardin). Moreover, the Anglican church at least has gone on the defensive. When theological writers defend religious doctrines on the ground that they are useful myths, the humanist who campaigns in the old terms finds himself attacking a man of straw. The Anglican church, again, has little or no political power, and socially it has become much more progressive. On such issues as capital punishment, birth-control, and the reform of the laws concerning homosexuality, the bishops have come out very well. Even the Roman Catholic church shows some signs of being willing to adapt its social outlook to the times.

This is not to say that the religious battle has been entirely won. If we apply behavioural criteria to the measurement of belief, we can indeed conclude that the percentage of religious believers among the English population is relatively small. Nevertheless the official doctrine is still that England is a Christian country. It is a legal requirement that religious instruction be given in all maintained schools, and that the daily Assembly should involve a corporate act of worship. Admittedly, the interpretation of this law is not in practice very rigorous, but I fear that any attempt to abolish it would raise a political storm which would be out of all proportion to the part that religion does actually play in people's lives. The official doctrine is also upheld by those who control the media of mass communication. Agnostics are very far from being muzzled, but they do not as yet receive an equal opportunity to state their case. A few months ago the B.B.C. took a small step forward. They arranged for a series of six broadcasts in which members of the Humanist Association replied to questions very fairly put to them by Kenneth Harris, and published them first in the *Listener* and then as a brochure. But the broadcasts went out only on Saturday mornings and lasted only a quarter of an hour. There has been no indication since that the B.B.C. has any plans for allowing the humanists to take a substantial part in the religious discussions which it promotes so frequently both on the wireless and on television. All the same, this is a minor grievance. The Humanist

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Association could hardly justify its existence if it had no greater function than to press for more time on the B.B.C.

IT CAN BE ARGUED that this is only one part of a wider educational campaign which it is still necessary to conduct. Even so the fact is that the major issues now lie in a different terrain. With the decline in the importance of the religious question, the main interest of the humanist movement is moving into the field of social reform. There is a logical as well as a historical reason for this. In one sense, humanism is a harsh doctrine. To insist that life has only the meaning that one succeeds in giving it, that we have only this short amount of time to experience any happiness or accomplish anything of value, is all very well for people who are living in easy circumstances and have been given the opportunity to develop intellectual and cultural interests. For those who are ignorant, helpless, and in material want, it is small consolation to be told only that their miseries will end with death; and throughout history the majority of human beings have been in this condition. It would, therefore, be insensitive if not hypocritical for humanists to preach their doctrine unless they believed that the values which they set on human experience and achievement were capable of being realised not merely by a privileged minority but by mankind in general. Even if they cannot be assured that this will ever be so, they at least have the moral obligation to do what they can to make it possible.

The consequence, politically, is that a humanist is likely to be a man of the left. It may be thought unfair to the present-day Conservative Party to assume that it cares less than its rivals for the welfare of the people as a whole, but, fairly or not, it still carries the aura of the *laissez-faire* tradition which it purloined from its 19th-century Liberal adversaries. The emphasis on private initiative, the plea that the labourer should be worthy of his hire, exert their appeal. But the suspicion remains that they cover a willingness to let the weakest go to the wall. In contrast, the Labour Party has always stood, in its own eyes and to a very large extent in the eyes of the general public, for social equality and justice.

In 1945 these professions were honoured to a degree which has since been underrated. What confidence can we have that this will happen again? The answer depends very largely on the power of the government to master the economic crisis, and this is a question on which I do not feel competent to pronounce. I credit it with the will to carry through its egalitarian policies with regard to such fundamental social problems as those of pensions and housing. I can only hope that it will find the means.

The problem of housing enters into the problem of race relations. One of the most encouraging features of the recent election was that the rather more liberal attitude of the Labour Party on the question of immigration did not militate against them. The drawback is that they can interpret this in two ways, either as an encouragement to increase their liberality, or as a justification of their somewhat restrictive Immigration Act. Again I can only hope that the first course will be followed.

In the narrower but vital domain of legal reform, the great achievement of the last Parliament was the abolition of capital punishment. If the session had lasted longer, one would almost certainly have been able to add to this the reform of the law concerning homosexuality, on the lines of the recommendations of the Wolfenden report. Credit for this goes to members of all parties. It is not clear how far the courageous action of Humphry Berkeley in introducing his Private Member's Bill in the Commons was responsible for his losing his place in Parliament, but I am afraid that it may have been a factor. It is much to be hoped that a safe Conservative constituency will soon be found for him. It would be lamentable if his example were to deter others either from initiating or from supporting a similar measure, but I do not believe that it will, I believe that this long-overdue reform will be enacted fairly early in the life of the present Parliament.

I am rather less optimistic about the immediate prospect of liberalising either the laws concerning abortion, or those concerning divorce, though in both instances and especially in that of the abortion laws, a very strong case can be made for reform. At some stage, however, such measures will be introduced, very probably, here again, in the form of Private Member's Bills. I doubt if the government will officially support them, but with Roy Jenkins as Home Secretary, there is good reason to expect that it will display at least a very benevolent neutrality.

THE FORTUNE OF MEASURES of this kind depends, to a large extent, on the politicians' evaluation of public opinion; and public opinion depends

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upon education. I am thinking here not so much of the effects of the propaganda which is put out by the advocates of reform, as of the liberal attitude, the tolerance, the willingness to listen to reason, which a good education develops. Our educational system has greatly improved throughout this century, but it still has very serious weaknesses. There are many good and dedicated teachers in the maintained schools but they are overworked and underpaid. In general, there are not enough teachers and too large a turnover. A number are unwilling or unable to adapt themselves to the new, more imaginative, methods of instruction. Too many children, not always through the fault of the schools but also because of their social environment develop a hostility to learning. The parallel existence of the public and private sectors sustains class-consciousness. The proportion of an age-group which reaches the Universities or the Technical and Training Colleges is still absurdly small. All these are problems to the solution of which a radical administration should be expected to give a high priority.

The need for a general improvement in the standard of education would not be disputed by any political party. The question on which there is disagreement is whether this can be satisfactorily achieved within the existing framework. There have been good Conservative Ministers of Education, like Lord Eccles and Sir Edward Boyle, but they have not effected any radical changes in the educational structure. It now appears that such changes will be made. I welcome the pressure which Anthony Crosland is putting on local authorities to set up comprehensive schools, if only because it will open the doors of a higher education to a wider range of children. I also welcome his setting up the Newsom Commission to consider what can and should be done about the Public Schools, though when it comes to practical proposals I am not sure what the right answer to these questions is. These matters affecting the schools seem to me more important at this stage than the expansion of university education, since it is only if the schools do their work properly that the expansion can be justified. For the same reason I attach most importance of all to the supply and training of teachers and to the reform of primary education. If the primary schools are put in good order, all the rest will follow in due course. Provided that the money can be made available, I see no good reason why this should not happen.

I SAID EARLIER that humanists must be concerned with the welfare of mankind in general. In the present state of the world, this implies that their outlook must be international. I should expect them, in immediate political terms, to approve of the Government's action over Rhodesia and its policy of furnishing aid, so far as its means permit, to under-developed countries, but to be critical of its support for the American action in Viet Nam. I should also expect them on the whole to favour our entry into Europe. To my mind, the reasons for entering Europe are less economic than political. It is a possible first step towards the transcendence of national sovereignty. But this means that the Europe which we enter must not be de Gaulle's Europe of nations but a Europe at least on the way to becoming a political federation. I do not believe that the acceptance of our place in a Europe of this kind will come so soon or so easily as its advocates expect, but I believe that it will come.

A. J. Ayer

Etc.

AT ABOUT ONE in the morning, Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker was seen to smile. It was one of the most arresting sights to have appeared on political television: there were vast heavings and crackings in his face as long-atrophied muscles began, shrieking with pain, to work once more, and I swear that bits of his cheeks and jaw actually flaked off and fell to the ground. Joy, if not exactly unconfined, was at any rate available.

The rest was swiftly garnered; Brooke, Amery, Griffiths, sneezed into the basket; Lord Erroll made a splendid fool of himself; the computers once again got it wildly wrong (you would think somebody would bother to feed in the difference between an urban and a rural constituency); Brigadier Clarke, blown out of the water at Portsmouth, took it badly, and

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Commander Courtney, felled by the Bolsheviki at Harrow, even worse; truly, our cup ran over.

Which no doubt accounted for the horrid sticky sensation. For the feeling of anti-climax was not simply due to the rapidity and relentlessness with which the swing had set in; it was, even more, a result of the sudden glimpse I had caught of my face in the mirror of the next five years. Haggard and sick, it stared accusingly back at me. What had I done?

Precisely at the moment at which the question presented itself, the Prime Minister appeared on the screen, and the sound failed. I sat, paralysed with remorse, making up the dialogue as I watched him puffing away in profile and doing his statesmanship act. The problems, no doubt, were grave; but the vote of confidence the country had given was, presumably, heartening. Given a real sense of national purpose, I imagine, we would pull through; the road, undeniably, was a long and difficult one.

What have we done? Elected a Government that will quite possibly ruin the economy, wreck our relations with Europe, nationalise steel, throw worse money after bad on the Concord, build more sub-standard houses, give in to both sides simultaneously over Rhodesia, devalue the pound, destroy the education system, and quite certainly fail to improve the weather. What *have* we done?

The positive achievements seem at first almost entirely negative. It is good and right that the Conservative Party should be driven into the wilderness for a substantial period, to fashion a new political philosophy that will be neither *ad hoc* nor *ad hominem*. It is excellent, too, that so much Tory dead wood was burnt on the pyre of the swing.

The composition of much of the new intake on the Government side of the House of Commons is certainly encouraging, containing as it does a high proportion of men with the kind of intelligence and training that will make them more than ordinarily dissatisfied with the methods and procedure of Parliamentary politics. And Labour's left wing, having displayed its moral bankruptcy and political impotence when it had the Government at its mercy, can safely be ignored now that it has not.

But that is hardly an impressive catalogue of benefits accruing from the election. The Government must surely be engaged on something more than a holding operation, keeping the pot on the boil until a new set of Tory cooks can take over the kitchen. Let us see whether there is in fact anything more important to be expected in the next five years.

If there is, I think it will be found in a strip of ground running parallel to that on which the Attlee Government built its achievements. Then, it was a matter of elementary social reforms, delayed for decades by sloth and insensitivity on the part of the pre-war Government. It is true that the social services themselves are now very badly run down, and—worse—in many ways misdirected, and Mr. Wilson's Government seems determined not to do anything about at any rate the second half of this state of affairs. But there is an even more urgent job to be done, and the importance of that one, at any rate, the Government does seem to be seized of.

If this Government is to be remembered for anything positive, it must be for its encouragement of efficiency. Now efficiency is, strictly speaking, a technical concept, measuring the work done between the original input and the final output; and it would be no bad thing if we were to work with this restricted definition. For what holds Britain back in so many ways is, simply, waste. Waste of manpower, for instance, in "padded" industries; waste of modern techniques in under-equipped ones; waste of national resources on unattainable aims overseas; waste of potential achievement and actual ability in our class system; waste of time and temper in labour disputes that are not in fact about the ostensible *casus belli*; waste through our tax structure of the productive force in ambition and acquisitiveness; waste of energy in our society's concentration on the imbecile ephemera of pop and all that goes with it; waste of effort at every level and in every area.

It is this Government's job, and may even be their achievement, to put an end to such waste. But in tackling it, the Government must be sure why it is doing so. For although efficiency is strictly speaking only a tool, what the tool is making is after all more important. We *have* to be a more efficient society to survive; but we *ought* to be a more efficient society in order to be a more just one. In other words, the job the Wilson Government has to do is ultimately the same as that which faced Attlee, except that the field of operations is different.

What we want, in fact, is a joy-through-strength campaign.

And I do not mean the marsh-light variety implied by Miss Jennie Lee's White Paper on

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the Arts, with the concomitant handouts, the unanimously favourable reception of which is in itself almost a definition of the fallacy within it. This is the belief that because you can have more art if you give the artists more money, the art will be better art and more people will come to appreciate it. The principal truths about art in this country since the war are the ones that nobody will face, namely that on the one hand there is far too much of it and most of it is lousy, and on the other this situation is getting worse, not better. Mass culture is becoming more dominant, not less. One of the most interesting developments in the arts took place just after the war with the astonishing rise of the English ballet, and the huge following it attracted, but nobody has examined that following's decline into the sort of worthless star-worship on which it feeds today and which has made the art once again an irrelevance of interest only to an irrelevant minority.

Nobody has in fact asked, though the White Paper thinks it has, why it is nowadays that even where—as has occasionally been the case—the arts in this country have had all the necessary resources at their disposal, they have made no lasting impression on most people, and not much on any. Provided the National Theatre is packed to the doors, the Ministry of Culture thinks its job is done. It does not occur to them to ask what the door-packers are there for, what they think they are getting out of it, or what permanent love of art it implies.

And now the button is pressed, and out comes the money. Where the Arts Council previously subsidised forty repertory companies, now it will be able to subsidise four hundred, then four thousand, then, no doubt, four million. If the theatre is there, it is argued, people will eventually go to it. But the fact that our culture did once extend right down throughout the mass of the population, and now does not, should surely alert the authorities to the fact that there is something rather more fundamental amiss than a lack of money. Of course, there is a lack of money, and of course it is good that there should be more of it available; of course, also, the repulsive philistinism of, say, the Aitken *Express* is worse than any excess of the opposite spirit. But the decline in our culture has not been caused either by its poverty or by assaults upon it, and for years to come nobody in authority is going to try to find out what, then, has caused it, leaving it instead to such predictably, not to say absurdly, Marxist analysts as Mr. Stuart Hall. The immediate remedy for a severed artery is not, surprising though it may seem, a blood transfusion.

THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPORTUNITY is a huge one. It is to lay the foundations for a society that will no more accept the kind of industrial relations, the kind of trade unions, the kind of towns, the kind of houses, the kind of justice, that at present exist, any more than we would now accept mass unemployment or the necessity for poor people to have to buy spectacles by trying on a succession of pairs from a tray of them at Woolworths.

The Government should, of course, combine this with a determined assault on Europe; and that, at least, will happen, if only on the grounds that Mr. Wilson made it fairly clear during the Election that it wouldn't. (I once saw a film in which one character said of another: "If that man said 'Good morning' to me I'd figure it was night-time and go to bed.") But the European involvement is almost inevitable; the rest of the programme is emphatically not. And it is desperately necessary precisely because it does not seem inevitable. It needed an American to point out, a year ago, that the two parties' rival claims for their respective totals of houses built had elevated into a matter for congratulation achievements so inadequate that they in fact constituted a particularly sordid national disgrace. And it is this refusal to accept the unacceptable that the Government has got to base its five-year election campaign upon.

APART FROM ANYTHING ELSE, such a course of action is necessary if the desired transformation in the Conservative Party is to come about. One of the principal causes of their previous renaissance was their touchingly naïve realisation that people actually *liked* universally available medical treatment paid for out of taxation, not to mention reasonably secure employment. A programme of new-style social justice undertaken by the Labour Government would similarly speed the necessary modernisation of the Opposition today.

But it is necessary even more for the elementary reason that it would make the country a better place to live in, and the sooner the country is a better place to live in, the better it will be for us all. If we are going to enter Europe, we might as well do it properly and

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lead the resulting broadened grouping. But to do so, we must be doing something to justify the acceptance of our leadership. Not even Tory MPs—or not many, anyway—talk any longer about the world waiting for a moral lead from this country; but it is possible to imagine the leadership we could demand as of right if Britain were as socially just as Sweden and still retained the role that Sweden does not aspire to.

There is a paragraph by Logan Pearsall Smith in which he likens his feelings after talking to a particularly high-minded old lady to those consequent upon going up in a balloon. In a sense, after indulging in such fantasies, I am now experiencing the same. And what I see from the air is what we may indeed get instead; the old, depressing landscape of nationalisation and insularity; the spectacle of Mr. Frank Cousins at the Ministry of Technology, matching Lytton Strachey's picture of the Duke of Wellington at the War Office, "repressing reform with an iron hand"; the endless multiplication of committees and commissions and other devices for shifting Mr. Wilson's responsibilities on to shoulders more willing to bear them; all the old, tired attitudes that held Labour back for so long and are powerful still.

So it may well not happen, and we shall trudge through the five years seeing Britain not made more just, more healthy, more modern, more efficient, more powerful, but declining still further into the status of a third-class country with ideas above her station. And all because we elected a Government which we might have known would quite possibly ruin the economy, wreck our relations with Europe, nationalise steel, throw worse money after bad on the Concord, build more sub-standard houses, give in to both sides simultaneously over Rhodesia, devalue the pound, destroy the education system, and quite certainly fail to improve the weather. What *have* we done?

Bernard Levin

Pumpkins

At the end of the garden,
Across the litter of weeds and grass cuttings,
The pumpkin spreads its coarse,
Bristled, hollow-stemmed lines,
Erupting in great leaves
Above flowers
The nobbly and prominent
Stigmas of which
Are like fuses
Waiting to be set by bees.

When, like a string
Of yellow mines
Across the garden,
The pumpkins will smoulder
And swell,
Drawing their combustion from the sun
To make their own.

At night I lie
Waiting for detonations,
Half expecting
To find the garden
Cratered like a moon.

John Cotton

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Nadine Gordimer

The Late Bourgeois World

Men owe us what we imagine they will give us. We must forgive them this debt.
SIMONE WEIL

I OPENED the telegram and said, "He's dead—" and as I looked up into Graham Mill's gaze I saw that he knew who, before I could say. He had met Max, my first husband, a few times, and of course he had heard all about him, he had helped me get to see him when he was in prison. "How?" he said, in his flat professional voice, putting out his hand for the telegram, but I said, "Killed himself!"—and only then let him have it.

It read MAX FOUND DROWNED IN CAR CAPE-TOWN HARBOUR. It had been sent by the friend with whom he had probably been staying; I have not heard from Max for more than a year, he didn't even remember Bobo's birthday last month. "Doesn't say when it was," Graham said.

"Last night, or early this morning, must have been." My voice came out cold and angry; I could hear it. It made Graham nervous, he nodded slowly while staring away from me. "Otherwise it would have been in the morning paper. I don't think I looked at the late news—"

The newspaper was on the table among the coffee things. Our cups were half drunk, our cigarettes burned in the saucers; I don't have to go to work on Saturdays, and, as usual, Graham had come to share my late breakfast. We always divide the newspaper, like any old married couple, and the page containing the stop press column was resting against the honey jar. There was a smear of stickiness on the latest scores in an international golf match: that was all.

Graham, reading over the telegram, said, "Why—I wonder." This was not an unforeseeable end for Max; Graham was questioning what specific demand had brought it about.

I felt immense irritation break out like cold sweat and answered, "Because of me!"

Since I had gone to the door to receive the telegram I had not sat down and stood about like someone stung by insult. Graham patiently bore my angry voice, yet though he must know I spoke in the sense of "to spite me," I saw in his face the astonishing consideration of a self-accusation I had never made, a guilt that, God knows, *he* knew was not mine. Blast him, he chose deliberately to misunderstand me.

He is good about practical matters and he was the first to think of Bobo—"What about the boy? You don't want him to read about it in tonight's paper. Shall I drive over to the school and tell him?" He always refers to Bobo as "the boy"; an expression indicative of formal concern for the sacredness of childhood that amuses me. But I said no, I'd go myself. "The boy" is mine, after all. Perhaps unconsciously—let's be fair to him —Graham tries to move in on responsibility for the child as a means of creating some sort of surety for his relationship with me. It's not for nothing that he has a lawyer's mind. If Bobo starts looking upon any man I'm friendly with as a father, it could be awkward if the friendship were to wane.

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"Have some more coffee." Graham filled my cup and patted my chair. But I drank it standing. It was as if I had had a quarrel —but with whom—and were waiting for the right thing to be said—but by whom? "I'll have to go this morning. I've got to see my grandmother sometime this afternoon." He knows I don't visit the old lady very regularly; "Make it tomorrow." "No, it's her birthday today, I can't." He gave a little parenthetic smile. "How old is she now?"

"Somewhere in the eighties."

I knew exactly how the telegram was worded but I read it over again before crumpling it up and dropping it on the breakfast tray.

While I bathed and dressed Graham sat in the sun by the open doors of my balcony, reading the paper with the proper attention it is never given at table. As I went about the flat I kept catching sight of him, his long whipcord-covered legs breaking their knife-crease at the knee, his weekend tweed jacket and clean, old silk shirt, the pale creased jaw and deep eyes, behind glasses, of a man who works late into the nights. Graham has a long mouth whose lips, clearly defined in outline by a change in skin-texture like the milled edge of a coin, are a strange, bluish colour. Under the lights in court, in the fancy dress of a barrister, his face is only the heavy-rimmed glasses and this mouth.

When I was ready to go, he got up to leave the flat, too. "Will you get away from Grandmama in time for a drink at Schroeders'? They're leaving for Europe tomorrow."

"I don't think so."

"What about tonight? Would you like to have dinner somewhere?"

I said, "No, I can't . . . there's some damned dinner party. I can't."

He's not a child, he's forty-six, and he took up his cigarettes and car keys without pique. But as we were leaving the flat I was the one who said, "Could you do something for me? Do you think you could go to a florist and get them to send some flowers to the old lady? Shops'll be closing by the time I get back from the school." He nodded without smiling and wrote down the address in his small, beautiful handwriting.

THE ROAD to the school leads away from the hilly ridges of Johannesburg and soon strikes out straight through the mealie fields and flat highveld of the plain. It's early winter; it was one of those absolutely wind-still mornings filled with calm steady sunlight that makes the few trees look black against the pale grass. All that was left of the frost overnight was the fresh smell. There was an old pepper tree here and there, where there must once have been a farmhouse; eucalyptus with tattered curls of bark, twiggy acacias, mud-walls of an abandoned hut; an Indian store; a yellowing willow beside a crack in the earth.

It was all exactly as it had been. When I was a child. When Max was a child. It was the morning I had woken up to, gone out into again and again; the very morning. I felt the sun on my eyelids as I drove. How was it possible that it could be still there, just the same, the sun, the pale grass, the bright air, the feeling of it as it was when we had no inkling of what already existed within it. After all that had happened to us, how could this morning, in which nothing had yet happened, still exist? Time is change; we measure its passing by how much things alter. Within this particular latitude of space, which is timeless, one meridian of the sun identical with another, we changed our evil innocence for what was coming to us; if I had gone to live somewhere else in the world I should never have known that this particular morning—phenomenon of geographical position, yearly rainfall, atmospheric pressures—continues, will always continue, to exist.

Max grew up looking out on the veld, here. His parents had their farm—what the estate agents call a country estate—on the edge of the city. His father was a member of parliament and they used to have big Party receptions there. They bred pointers and ducks—for the look of the thing, Max used to say. But he told me that when he

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was a child he would come back from solitary games in the veld and at a certain point suddenly hear the distant quacking of the ducks like a conversation he couldn't understand.

ALL THIS was my way of thinking about Max's death, I suppose, because the fact of his death, even the manner of it, was just something that had been told me. Something to which my contemporary being said quietly: of course. Max had driven a car into the sea and gone down with it; as Max once burned his father's clothes, and, yes, as Max, three years ago, tried to blow up a post office. This time I wasn't looking, that's all. Oh will this child's game never end, between Max and me? *That* was what turned me cold with anger when the telegram came; the feeling that he was looking over the shoulder of his death to see... if I were looking?

Perhaps I was flattering myself (dreary flattery, balm that burned like ice, if it was) and there was someone else by now in whose eye he saw himself—friend, woman—it didn't matter whom. But I knew, when I read the telegram, it was *for me*. The worn phrases of human failure, "everything was finished," "broken up," have taken on a new lease of literal meaning between Max and me, we have truly gone through every possibility by which attachment can survive, worn them all threadbare, until any kind of communication was no longer contained, but went like a fist through empty air. And as for broken up—the successive images in which I—we—had seen ourselves together were splintered to crystal dust—like the broken glass, residue of some collision, that I swerved to avoid on the road. But Max would kick from the wreckage the button that asserts the identity of the dead.

The anger left me, then, melted. I always like driving by myself, it brings back something of the self-sufficiency of childhood, and in addition I had the curious freedom of a break in routine. Max was dead; I felt nothing directly about the fact except that I believed it. Yet it divided the morning before I had read the telegram from the morning after I had done so, and in the severance I was cut loose. Of course I can do what I like on Saturday mornings, but it's been weeks since I've done anything but have Graham in to breakfast, wash my hair, and perhaps go to the suburban shops. Even as irregular (in every sense of the word) a thing as this business with Graham and me has taken on a sort of pattern; we go away on holidays together but we don't sleep together often at home—and yet this casualness has become an "arrangement" in itself, and even my evenings in bars and clubs with people he's never heard of are part of habit.

IT IS ALSO RARE for me to get a chance to see Bobo on a Saturday; he's allowed out only twice a month, on Sundays, and the school discourages visits from parents in between times. I realised I hadn't got anything for him. Perhaps they'd let me take him out and I could buy him tea and cream scones at the country hotel near the school. Anyway, I'm the one for whom it is necessary to have presents for Bobo. I see this in his face when I anxiously lay out my carriers of apples and packets of sweets. I know that it is my way of trying to make up for sending him to that place—the school. And yet I had to do it; I have to cover up my reasons by letting it be taken for granted that I want him out of the way. For the truth is that I would hold on to Bobo, if I let myself. I could keep him clamped to my belly like one of those female baboons who carry their young clinging beneath their bodies. And I would never let go.

I can't give him the life with the indispensable units, a mother and father and family, I was taught was a sacred trust to provide for any child I might "bring into the world." I'm not even sure it would be enough, either, if I could. I had that life, Max had it, and yet it hasn't seemed to have provided what it turned out we needed. Oh I know it's easy enough to blame our parents for our troubles, and we belong to the generation that lays down its burdens on Freud,

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as our parents were exhorted to lay down theirs on Jesus. But I don't think that the code of decent family life, kindness to dogs and neighbours, hand-outs to grateful servants, has brought us much more than bewilderment. What about all those strangers the code didn't provide for, the men who didn't feel themselves to be our servants and had nothing to be grateful for in being fobbed off with hand-outs, the people who weren't neighbours and crowded in on us with hurts and hungers kindness couldn't appease? I don't know what will be asked of Bobo by the time he grows up, but I do know that the sort of background I was told a child should expect would leave him pretty helpless. I can only try to see to it that he looks for his kind of security elsewhere than in the white suburbs.

He wasn't made there, thank God. It was in a car—which is where the white suburbs keep their sex. But at least it was out in the veld. One of the millions of babies made in cars, plantations, parks, alleys, all over the world. Because the suburbs, while talking romantic rubbish about "the young people" among the flowers and decanters of the living-room, ignore sex, the defining need of their youth. There are bedrooms, studies, dens, porches; but no place for that. I said to Max, "You forgot." He shrugged gloomily, as if he had never promised. But I knew it was my "fault" as much as his. Then he said, speaking without any relation to circumstances, as he often did, "I'd like to have a child of my own. I'd like to have a child of my own. I'd like to have a child following me round, there's nothing doggy about children. A child shouts 'Look!' all the time and you see real things, colours of stones, and bits of wood." The last time he saw Bobo was more than a year ago. I could see that he liked him better than when he was little and used to yell; I was pleased that he could fool with him and forget that he used to yell back until the child's open mouth went soundless with fright and I had to take him away and carry him round the streets.

Just before I reached the school there was one of those lorries that sell fruit at the side of the road, and a black man jumped up from a little fire he'd made himself and pranced out with an orange stuck on a stick. I bought a packet of nartjies for Bobo.

THE SCHOOL has very large grounds with a small dam and a plantation of eucalyptus trees—that was one of the reasons why I chose it: so that he would have somewhere that at least he could pretend was wild, to get away to from playing fields and corridors. It's difficult to remember what it was like being a child, but I do know that it was essential to have such a place. The buildings (and the gateposts with their iron arch bearing the school crest, and name in Celtic lettering) are of yellow brick that breaks out in crosses, raised like Braille bumps, all over the place. The sight of the school produces a subdued and cowed mood in me; I go on mental tiptoe from the moment I enter that gateway. Black men in neat overalls are always busy in the grounds trimming the hedges at sharp right-angles and digging round the formal beds and clipped shrubs; they were sweeping up leaves, this time. Tin signs cut in the shape of a hand with pointing forefinger and painted in the headmaster's wife's Celtic lettering, indicate "Visitors' Parking," "Staff Only," "Office." The whole curve of the drive before the main building was empty but in the subservient anxiousness to do right that comes over me, I left the car in the visitors' parking ground. It was about eleven o'clock and the cries of the boys at break came from the quadrangles and playing fields behind the buildings. I know that my view of the place is absurdly subjective, but how like a prison it was! Behind the clean and ugly bricks, a great shout of life going up, fading into the sunlit vacuum. I went up the polished steps and dropped the heavy knocker on the big oiled door.

It was opened by what must have been a new junior master, heavy-jawed, nice-looking, with the large, slightly shaky hands, powerful but helpless, of the young man

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who is going through the stage of intense desire for women without knowing how to approach any. He wore shabby, fashionably narrow-legged pants and a knitted tie and was obviously one of the Oxford or Cambridge graduates working their way round Africa who are counted on to bring a healthy blast of contemporaneity into the curriculum. (Bobo has told me about one who played the guitar and taught the boys American anti-bomb and anti-segregation folk songs.)

The headmaster was at tea in the staff room, but the young man took me to the headmaster's study and asked me to sit down while he fetched him. I've been in that study a number of times; hostilely clean, hung with crossed-armed athletic groups, the shiny brown plastic flooring covered with a brown carpet in the standard concession to comfort to be found in the rooms of administrators of institutions. There was even a framed cartoon of the headmaster, cut from the school magazine; everyone said what an "approachable," "human" man he was.

He said how nice it was to see me—just as if one could drop in to the school any old time, instead of being sternly discouraged from appearing outside the prescribed visiting days. And although he must have known I had something serious to say, his quick, peg-on-the-nose voice dealt out a succession of pleasantries that kept us both hanging fire. But no doubt the poor devil dreads parents' problems, and this is just an unconscious device to stave off their recital. I told him that Bobo's father had died, and how. He was understanding and sensible, according to the manual of appropriate behaviour for such an occasion, but in his face with its glaze of artificial attentiveness there was certainty of his distance from people like us. He knew the circumstances of Bobo's background; divorce, political imprisonment, and now this. He knew it all the way, as a broad-minded man and a good Christian. I suppose he follows in the papers the Church's self-searching over homosexuality or abortion. He and Mrs. Jellings, who teaches art at the school, must have been married for at least twenty-five years, and last year their daughter was married from the school with a guard of honour of senior boys.

He got up and opened the door and stopped a boy who was passing in the corridor. "Braithwaite! Send Bruce Van Den Sandt here, will you? D'you know him? He's in fourth." "Yes sir, I know Van Den Sandt, sir. I think he's on library duty." And he skidded off in a way that automatically drew a quick dent between the headmaster's eyebrows.

Bruce Van Den Sandt. I hardly ever hear the name spoken. This is the other Bobo, whom I will never know. Yet it always pleases me to hear it; a person in his own right, complete, conjured up in himself. It was Max's name; Max was dead, but like a word passed on, his name was called aloud in the school corridor.

The headmaster said, "Come in here. I suppose you'll want to talk to him alone; that'll be best." And he opened a door I'd seen, but never been through before, marked "Visitors' Room." I'd cowardly lost the moment to say, "I'd like to take him out and talk to him while we drive." Why am I idiotically timid before such people, while at the same time so critical of their limitations?

I SAT in this shut-up parlour whose purpose I had now gained entry to and waited quite a while before the door flung open and he filled the doorway—Bobo. He had the glowing ears and wide nostrils of a boy brought from the middle of a game, his hands were alert to the catch, his clothes were twisted, his smile was a grin of breathlessness. The high note of this energy might, like a certain pitch in music, have silently shattered the empty vase and the glass on the engravings of Cape scenes.

"Ma? Well, nobody told me you were coming!"

He hugged me and we giggled, as we always do with the glee of being together and clandestine to school and everything else.

"How'd you get in?"

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I hadn't thought about what I was going to say to Bobo, and now it was too late. I gripped his hand and gestured hard, with it in mine, once or twice, to call us to attention, and said, "We've got to talk, Bobo. Something about Max, your father."

At once he caught me out, as if he were the adult and I the child. He understood that I never referred to Max as anyone but "Max." He was little when Max was on trial and in prison, but I have told him all about it since he's been older. He nodded his head with a curious kind of acceptance. He knows there is always the possibility of trouble.

We sat down together on the awful little settee, like lovers facing each other for a declaration in a Victorian illustration. He dragged at his collapsed socks—"Pull your socks up, your mother's here, Jelly said."

"He died, Bobo. They sent me a telegram this morning. It'll be in the papers, so I must tell you—he killed himself."

Bobo said, "You mean he committed suicide?"

Amazement smoothed and widened his face, the flush left it except for two ragged patches, like the scratches of some animal, on the lower cheeks. What came to him in that moment must have been the reality of all the things he had read about, happening to other people, the X showing where on the pavement the body fell, the arrow pointing at the blurred figure on the parapet.

I said "Yes" and to blot it all out, once and for all, to confine it, "He must have driven his car into the sea. He was never afraid of the sea, he was at home in it."

He nodded, but he kept his eyes wide open on me, the brows, over their prominent frontal ridge, scrolled together in concentration. What was he facing? The fact of his own death? Mine? Bobo and I didn't have to pretend to each other that we were grieving over Max in a personal way. If you haven't had a father, can you lose him? Bobo hardly knew him; and although I hadn't, couldn't explain all that to him, he knows that I had come to the end of knowing Max.

Bobo said, "I somehow just can't see his face."

"But it's not so long since you saw him. Eighteen months, not more."

"I know, but then I hardly remembered what he looked like at all, and I was looking at him all the time the way you do with a new person. Then afterwards you can't see their face."

"You've got a photograph, though." There on his locker, the upright leather folder with mother on one side, father on the other, just as all the other boys have.

"Oh yes."

There didn't seem to be anything else to say; at least, not all at once, and not in that room.

"I brought you some nartjies. I forgot to get anything in town."

He said absently, making the show of pleasure that is his form of loving politeness. "Mmm . . . thanks. But I won't take them now . . . just before you go, so's when I've seen you off I can stick them in my desk before anyone sees."

Then he said, "Let's go outside for a bit," and when I said, "But are we allowed to? I wanted to ask Mr. Jellings—" "—Really, Mummy, what's there to be so chicken about? I don't know how you'd manage in this joint!" As we closed the door of the visitors' room behind us, I said, "We've never been in there, before." "It's for long-distance parents, really, though I don't know what it's *for*—you can tell from the pong no one ever goes in there." I smiled at the jargon. Bobo has mastered everything; that place has no terrors for him.

We kept to the formal, deserted front garden, away from the other boys. We walked up and down, talking trivialities, like people in hospital grounds who are relieved to have left the patient behind for a while. Bo told me he had written to me asking for new soccer boots, and whether it would be all right if Lopert came home with him next Sunday. I'd had a circular from the school about boxing lessons, and wanted to know if Bo were interested.

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Then we went to sit in the car, and he teased, "Whyn't you just park in town and walk, Ma?"

Like most boys Bobo has a feeling for cars akin to the sense of place, and when he gets into the car I can see that it's almost as if he were home, in the flat. He noses through all the old papers that collect on the shelf beneath the dashboard and looks for peppermints and traffic tickets in the glove box. I am often called upon to explain myself.

He was sitting beside me touching a loose knob, probably noting with some part of his mind that he must fix it sometime, and he said, "I don't suppose it was painful or anything."

I said, "Oh no. You mustn't worry about that." Because all his life, he's been made aware of the necessity to recognise and alleviate suffering; it's the one thing he's been presented with as being beyond questioning, since the first kitten was run over and the first street beggar was seen displaying his sores.

"Just the idea." His head was low; now he looked round towards me without lifting it, sideways, and I knew quite well that what he was really asking about was the unknown territory of adult life where one would choose to die. But I wasn't equal to that. He was. He blurted, "I feel sorry I didn't love him."

I looked at him without excuses. The one thing I hope to God I'll never do is fob him off with them.

I said, "There may be talk among the boys—but you know he went after the right things, even if perhaps it was in the wrong way. The things he tried didn't come off but at least he didn't just eat and sleep and pat himself on the back. He wasn't content to leave bad things the way they are. If he failed, well, that's better than making no attempt. Some boys'"—I was going to say "fathers" but I didn't want him to go attacking all the scions of stockbroking houses—"some men live successfully in the world as it is, but they don't have the courage even to fail at trying to change it."

He looked satisfied. He is only a little boy, after all; he said with a rough sigh, "We've had a lot of trouble through politics, haven't we."

"Well, we can't really blame this on politics. I mean, Max suffered a lot for his political views, but I don't suppose this—what he did now—is a *direct* result of something political. I mean—Max was in a mess, he somehow couldn't deal with what happened to him largely, yes, because of his political actions, but also because . . . in general, he wasn't equal to the demands he . . . he took upon himself." I added lamely, "As if you insisted on playing in the first team when you were only good enough—strong enough for third."

As he followed what I was saying his head moved slightly in the current from the adult world, the way I have sometimes noticed a plant do in a breath of air I couldn't feel.

IN THE END he has to take on trust what he is told; the only choice he can exercise is *by whom*. And he chooses me. At times I'm uneasy to see how sceptically he reports what he is told by others. But the reaction will come with adolescence, if I'm to believe what *I've* been told is "healthy development." He'll tear me down. But with what? Of course I'd craftily like to find out, so that I can defend myself in advance, but one generation can never know the weapons of the next. He picked up my hand and kissed it swiftly on the back near the thumb just as he used to do suddenly, for no reason I knew, when he was little. It must be five years since he stopped doing it, out of embarrassment or because he didn't need to. But there was no one to see, in the empty car park. He said, "What are you going to do today? Is Graham coming over?"

"I don't think so. I saw him this morning, he was there for breakfast."

"I expect Jellings'll put Max in prayers tonight. Usually when a relation dies he's in prayers."

So Max would have a service for his soul in the school chapel. There wouldn't be any

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other. It wasn't likely they'd pray for him, the ones he worked with, the ones he betrayed. Max wasn't anybody's hero; and yet, who knows? When he made his poor little bomb it was to help blow the blacks free; and when he turned State witness the whites, I suppose, might have taken it as justification for claiming him their own man. He may have been just the sort of hero we should expect.

I've noticed that Bobo always senses when I am about to go. He said, "Let me turn the car for you?", and I didn't dare suggest that he might get into trouble if anyone saw him, but obediently moved over to the passenger seat as he got out and came round to the driver's side. He drove once right round the parking ground and then I said, "That's enough. Hop out." He laughed and pulled a face and put the brake on. "See you Sunday week, then. And you're bringing what's-isname—"

"Lopert."

"I don't think I've met him, have I? What about Weldon, doesn't he want to come too?" Weldon is another of the boys who live too far away to be able to go home on Sunday outings; all last term Bobo brought him to the flat.

"I expect he'll be going with the Pargiters."

"Have you two quarrelled or something?"

"No, well, he's always talking about 'munts' and things—and when we get hot after soccer he says we smell like kaffirs. Then when I get fed up he thinks it's because I'm offended at him saying *I'm* like a kaffir—he just doesn't understand that it's not that at all, what I can't stand is him calling them kaffirs and talking as if they were the only ones who ever smell. He just laughs and is as nice as anything.... He doesn't understand. There's nothing wrong in it, to him. Nearly all the boys are like that. You get to like them a hell of a lot, and then they say things. You just have to keep quiet." He was looking at me frowningly, his face stoical, dismayed, looking for an answer but knowing, already, there wasn't one. He said, "Sometimes I wish we were like other people."

I said, "What people?"

"They don't care."

"I know." In full view of blank school buildings we exchanged the approved cheek-kiss expected of mothers and sons. "Next Sunday."

"Don't be late. Don't forget to get up, the way you always do."

"Ne-ver! —The nartjies!" He turned back for me to thrust the paper carrier through the window, and I saw him career off up the drive with the bulge buttoned under his blazer, feet flying, whorl of hair sticking up on the crown. I felt, as I sometimes do, an unreasonable confidence in Bobo. He is all right. He will be all right.

In spite of everything.

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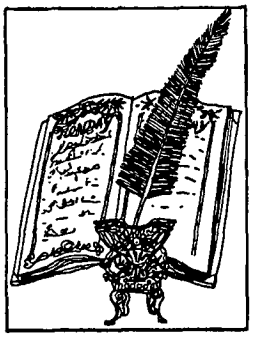

Column

WATCHING *The War Game* at the National Film Theatre, I had the sensation that I was being allowed to share secrets hitherto reserved for the élite. The BBC, having commissioned the film, had decided it was unsuitable for exhibition on television and, presumably in order to justify its decision, had shown it privately to carefully selected audiences, which included Tynan and the defence correspondents. Now it was being shown to the Press as a preview to a run at the National Film Theatre and at other cinemas.

I must confess that I left the theatre with conflicting feelings. The strongest ground for suppressing *The War Game*, as far as television is concerned, is that it is a horror film, and that television's captive audiences should presumably be protected against such an assault on their sensitive nerves; another is that it is a propaganda film, which might conceivably influence millions of views against Britain's policy of retaining the nuclear deterrent. Yet it is difficult to understand what else the BBC could expect of any honest attempt to represent on television the effects of nuclear war on the civilian population. It is equally difficult to believe that, if there are any who still underestimate what those effects will be, they should not be disabused of their comfortable illusions as quickly as possible. The horrors which Watkins' carefully selected and fabricated images are designed to illustrate are objective possibilities which are an integral part of the way we live now, and so far as we ignore them, we live in a world of illusion. Those blinded, mangled and gangrened children, those helpless victims sucked into the heart of a fire-storm, that descent of fire from heaven from which none will be spared, are in a sense already with us, as the unrealised possibilities of the course on which the world is set, and it is as well that we should all know it.

On the other hand, such knowledge does not provide any answer to the question: What Then Must We Do? *The War Game* assumes that its celluloid images of universal suffering and destruction are a sufficient solution to the dilemma created by the possibility of nuclear war, and that only those who are ignorant of, or insensitive to, its potential horrors could be in any doubt about what conclusion should be drawn from them. In this, the film makes an assumption of righteousness which does far less than justice to those who have the unfortunate task of facing the dilemma as a matter of practical politics.

AND INDEED THE MEANS by which it seeks to persuade us that only the ignorant or the malevolent could possibly believe in the policy of the nuclear deterrent are in some way self-defeating. The film makes its powerful impact primarily through the visual images which it presents; why is it that, immediately effective though they are, they are less deeply moving and significant than, say, Goya's *Désastres de la Guerre*, which makes against war in general the point which Watkins is making against nuclear war in particular? Is it simply that television, despite all the technical resources it can command, is still not capable of the emotional effects of a few strokes of a brush on a piece of paper? Or is it that Goya is a great artist and Watkins (*pace* Mr. Tynan) is not, but a propagandist, though a very skilful one? Or is it that, in the *Désastres de la Guerre,* Goya paints manifestations of evil which are inherent in all of us, while for Watkins the problems of nuclear warfare are reduced to a simple choice between wickedness and virtue?

Perhaps Watkins himself is aware of such questions. As if conscious that his images alone are not really adequate to their purpose, he supports them with a commentary which is highly selective and tendentious, all the more so because he seems to attribute to the Church an influence on nuclear policy which must have surprised the defence experts. Even so, it cannot conceal the fundamental flaw in the argument of the film. For *The War Game* totally ignores the major premise, that nuclear weapons are for deterrence and not for use, and for precisely the reasons which *The War Game* is designed to illustrate, on which the defence policies of all the major powers (with the possible exception of China) are based at the present time. Objectively, therefore, *The War Game* might be held to prove exactly the opposite of what it appears to intend, and this contradiction between reason and emotion may perhaps account for the curiously blurred impression which the film makes. No doubt Mr. Watkins might say that the premise is a false one; but the question is precisely whether it is more likely to be false than its opposite, and this question *The War Game* does not try to answer.

*

"HOW DOES our pursuit of affluence relate to our pursuit of happiness? What are the individual's rights and duties to this

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complex organised society which we are creating *ad hoc*? What is the place of conscience as against civic obligation? How do we reconcile —can we reconcile—our commitment to social equality with our commitment to personal liberty?" These are weighty questions; indeed so weighty that they fill me with a certain sense of gloom and despondency, all the more because, considered in the abstract, there is probably no answer to them.

Yet these, says Irving Kristol in the second number of the new American periodical *The Public Interest*, "are precisely the kind of questions that the literary intellectual ought to be *professionally* concerned with." I am not quite sure what a literary intellectual is, unless it means quite simply a writer of some kind; but there is no literary intellectual acquaintance of my own of whom I would expect that he would throw much light on such dark mysteries.

Perhaps this is unfair to Mr. Kristol. His article, entitled "The Troublesome Intellectuals," is really a paean of triumph inspired by the influence which intellectuals in general now exercise in American politics.

> None of the major programs of the Great Society is workable without their participation. The economists in the Council of Advisors, the scientists and social scientists in the Pentagon, the sociologists and psychologists in the Office of Economic Opportunity, the city planners in the new Department of Urban Affairs—these are very much signs of the times. Indeed, those government departments which have not yet intellectualized themselves—such as Commerce and Agriculture—are finding their political powers dwindling, their stature in the public eye diminishing, and their very existence being quietly questioned.

The Great Society clearly has many mansions —for economists, scientists and social scientists, sociologists and psychologists and city planners; but not apparently, even in wretched Commerce and Agriculture, for the "literary intellectual," condemned to brood in some Nissen hut in the grounds on the arid conundrums with which Mr. Kristol presents him. And yet, he says, unless they are answered, "we may find that America has absorbed its intellectuals without its intellectuals ever having quite absorbed America. This indeed would be a new kind of American tragedy."

It would indeed; and I cannot help thinking that if Mr. Kristol's (and L.B.J.'s?) hopes of the Great Society are based on the kind of answers to his questions which he may extract from literary intellectuals, they are likely to be disappointed. Curiously enough, in a recent number of the *Spectator* Arnold Beichman has been concerned with precisely the same question of the role of the literary intellectual in America, but rather less optimistically than Kristol. Reviewing, somewhat acidly, Alfred Kazin's fascinating little book of reminiscences, *Starting out in the Thirties*, Beichman quotes Whitehead on the difference between a purely literary treatment of abstract political problems and genuinely creative intellectual activity. "The literary exposition of freedom deals mainly with frills, the Greek myth was more to the point. Prometheus did not bring mankind the freedom of the press. He procured fire."

Beichman goes on to say that if America's literary intellectuals "wish to deal in politics as well as culture they will have to understand Whitehead. And when they have understood Whitehead, they will then have to understand that the most revolutionary development in contemporary world history has been the exponential increase of higher education in America and its utter classlessness. And then they will have to deal with the singular fact that their culture heroes—Eliot, Lawrence, Mann, Gide, Proust, Yeats, Pound, Faulkner, Henry James—were illiberal, reactionary, anti-radical, or whatever the jargon is; but, above all things, they were totally engaged with life."

One might disagree with some of Beichman's examples; but in the conflict of attitudes, which is of course a total one, between him and Kristol, it seems to me that he is fundamentally in the right. Certainly his view is the only one which allows the "literary intellectual" a chance to take himself seriously.

*

THE SENSE of *déja vu* which sometimes so mysteriously strikes us is one which many people have tried to explain, but none, I think, with entire success. Proust comes nearest to it; certainly the spirit of Proust seemed very near at a London concert which I attended the other day.

A Royal Person was there, in a strawberry pink dress made of materials that seemed to have come out of a fairy tale rather than any fashion house. Royal Persons float above, or below, fashion; or rather they seem to follow a fashion, timeless and unchanging, that has been created for themselves alone. She was followed by a group of attendants who, despite their sober lounge suits, still preserved that air of mingled deference and condescension which distinguishes the courtier.

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But there were others there too, who were more familiar to me. There was a pair of ageing fashionable ladies who reminded me of Proust's description of Parisian society in 1916. *Les dames du premier Directoire avaient une reine qui était jeune et belle et s'appellait Madame Tallien. Celles du second en avaient deux qui étaient vieilles et laides et s'appellaient Mme Verdurin et Mme Bontemps.* The Baron de Charlus was there, but he had married, and beside him sat his son, older now than his father when we first met him at Combray, in whom what remained of the wit and intelligence of the Guermantes was devoted to making a fortune on the Stock Exchange. Certainly Jupien was there; he had become the Editor of a with-it magazine and had acquired a proletarian protégé of his own, a designer of men's clothes who conducted a flourishing male boutique in Carnaby Street. And there was also Madame de Villeparisis, a little old lady now, but still assiduous in the pursuit of culture, so that however many concerts there were in London on any evening, she always succeeded in attending each one for the interval. And indeed they were all there, all that marvellous world in which snobbery, culture, beauty, vulgarity and cruelty were all inextricably mingled together, and as the admirable quartet played Haydn and Mozart and Schubert (but where was the *petite phrase*?) and the Bonnards shimmered like Elstirs on the wall, I amused myself by trying to identify them under their new disguises; only my amusement turned to dismay when I realised that they were all now infinitely older and more faded even than when we met them last in *Le Temps Retrouvé* and the taste of the *petite madeleine* reminded Proust that he had wasted his life in the pursuit of images of beauty, art and love that had all proved to be equally false and illusory.

SOMETIMES, writing these paragraphs, I wish I had some of the stage properties with which other columnists are so liberally provided. I wish, for instance, that I had a family of whimsy children, beatnik Peter Pans whose behaviour would allow me to speak with authority about the mysteries of the Teenage Thing. I wish that, like Bernard Levin, I had huge unexploded ammunition dumps of indignation ready to be detonated at any moment by the slightest manifestation of human folly and frailty. I wish like Mr. Iain Macleod I was at home at every kind of sporting contest and could remember the score between Fiji and Madagascar in 1897. I wish that at the bottom of the little pleasaunce of my *dacha* in Surrey I kept an old English sheepdog of a gardener, green-fingered and weatherwise, with whom on Saturday mornings I could discuss the progress of the primulas and the potatoes and the ancient country lore of the stockbroker belt. I wish that, like Paul Johnson, I could show my readers that though I walked with Cardinals I kept the common touch, by riding a Moulton bicycle on the tow-path of the Regent's Park Canal and acquiring perfectly execrable works of art at prices within the means of the humblest *New Statesman* director. I wish I had a man in the Elysée who would repeat to me the latest infinitely tasteless joke about Madame de Gaulle. I wish I had a Mummy, silver-haired now, but still preserving all the girlish charm of her youth, always at hand to remind me that despite my good looks, my success, and my smart friends, it is still better to be good than clever. I wish I had and were all of these things, because they are necessary if one is to fabricate a personality for oneself. But alas, I am and have none of them, and I am afraid that I and readers of this column must continue to soldier on without them.

R.

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The World of Raskolnikov

By Joseph Frank

MOST WESTERN criticism of Dostoevsky, when it is not searching his work for religious sustenance, approaches him from a psychological or biographical point of view. The overwhelming and immediate impression made by Dostoevsky's works on first reading is that of a passionate exploration of abnormal states of divided consciousness; and it has been only natural to assume that so masterly a portrayal of internal psychological conflict could only come from direct experience. Hence Dostoevsky's biography has been endlessly explored, analysed, and speculated about in the hope of uncovering some traumatic key to his creations.

Russian criticism since the Bolshevik Revolution has, of course, taken a different tack. It has tried to interpret him either in socio-psychological terms (he is a member of the "dispossessed and rootless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia," whose characters reflect all the abnormalities of this class), or it has engaged in genuine historical investigation and turned up numerous interesting relations between Dostoevsky's novels and the cultural history of his time. (In fairness, I should also mention the excellent stylistic researches of such critics as Leonid Grossman, Yuri Tynyanov, and V. V. Vinogradov, which form the basis for our contemporary understanding of Dostoevsky's art.) Since Dostoevsky, however, is still the most brilliant and devastating opponent of the men who provide the foundations for present Soviet culture—not Marx and Engels, but the Russian radical tradition of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky—Soviet historical study of Dostoevsky is inevitably handicapped in scope and myopic in interpretation.

Without accepting the theoretical premises of the Soviet approach to Dostoevsky, I believe, nonetheless, that the Russians are right in stressing the social and cultural dimensions of his work. For the exclusive Western emphasis on psychology and personal biography as a means of access to Dostoevsky's mind and art is unquestionably very limiting and very falsifying. I should probably argue the same in the case of any writer; but since my subject at the moment is not critical method, I shall only say that, of all the great modern writers, this type of biographical criticism seems to me *least* illuminating as regards Dostoevsky.

IF DOSTOEVSKY HAS one claim to fame, it is certainly as a great *ideological* novelist—perhaps not the greatest, for that would involve comparisons with Sterne and Cervantes, but at least the greatest in the 19th century. And if his status as such is so generally accepted, it must be because his creative imagination was stimulated primarily by the problems of his society and his time rather than by his personal problems and private dilemmas. Or, to put the point the other way round, he was always able to project these private dilemmas in terms that linked up with the sharp conflict of attitudes and values occurring in the Russia of his time.

This is the reason why psychology in Dostoevsky's novels, vivid and unforgettable though it may be, is invariably only an instrument or tool used for a thematic purpose that is ultimately moral-ethical and ideological in import—ideological in the sense that all moral values are connected in Dostoevsky's sensibility with the future destiny of Russian life and culture. More particularly, he saw all moral and ethical issues in the light of the inner psychological problems posed for the Russian intelligentsia by the necessity of assimilating (and living by) alien Western European ideas. Dostoevsky's extensive journalism of the early 1860s (most of which has not yet been translated) or, more accessibly, his travel-articles about Europe, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863), contain a whole history of Russian culture conceived in terms of this inner struggle. We cannot take even the first step towards understand-

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ing his major aim as a novelist, if we do not realise that he wished to portray the *new* types and modalities of this perennial Russian inner struggle springing up all around him in the turbulent and evolving Russia of the 1860s and 1870s.

IT IS from this point of view that we must take very seriously Dostoevsky's claim to "realism" for his novels—a claim which, in my opinion, is entirely justified. But let us be clear about the nature of this "realism" and the nature of Dostoevsky's imagination. He knew very well that he was not a "realist" in the sense of getting the normal, middle range of private and social experience on the page. This was why he spoke of his bent for "fantastic realism"; but what he meant by this term was something very clear and very specific. He meant that the process of his creation would invariably start from some doctrine that he found prevalent among the Russian radical intelligentsia. It was there in black-and-white in the magazines or novels everybody was reading, and in this sense was perfectly "real"—particularly since Dostoevsky believed in the reality of ideas. But then he would take this doctrine and imagine its most extreme consequences *if* it were really to be put into practice and carried through in all its implications; and this was where his psychological gifts came in to aid him in dramatising the "fantasy" of this idea relentlessly translated into life.

Dostoevsky was perfectly well aware that the extremism he depicted in such a character as Raskolnikov was not at all the way in which the vast majority of the radical intelligentsia would hold the doctrines in question, or the way in which it would affect their lives. But then, the people who accepted the theories of Leibniz in the 18th century bore little resemblance in real life to Dr. Pangloss and his pupil Candide. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that *Candide* dramatises a "real" fact of 18th-century culture. (It is suggestive that among the unfinished projects that Dostoevsky left at the time of his death was that of writing a Russian *Candide*.) Exactly the same relation obtains between the theories of Dostoevsky's protagonists, the acts to which their theories drive them, and the Russian culture of their time. Indeed, I think the best way to define Dostoevsky's particular uniqueness as a novelist is to call him a writer whose imagination naturally inclined to the *conte philosophique*, but who, happening to be born in the century of the realistic novel, possessed enough psychological genius to give his characters verisimilitude and to fuse one *genre* with the other. This, by the way, is one reason for the often-noted resemblance between *Notes from Underground* and *Le neveu de Rameau*, aside from the fact that 18th-century mechanical materialism was as important in the Russia of the 1860s as it had been in the France of Diderot.

I SHOULD NOW like to apply this general view of Dostoevsky to some of the problems involved in the interpretation of his first great novel, *Crime and Punishment*. If Dostoevsky invariably began with some doctrine of the Russian radical intelligentsia, what was his starting-point in this case? An answer to this question will, I believe, not only provide an entry into the book, but also explain why *Crime and Punishment* emerged when it did in Dostoevsky's development. Ordinarily, this novel is linked with his prison-term in Siberia, first because of his use of this setting in the Epilogue, and secondly because this period was supposed to have focused his attention on the problem of crime and the psychology of the criminal. None of this needs to be denied; but if this were the whole story, it is impossible not to wonder why Dostoevsky did not write *Crime and Punishment* when he came out of imprisonment and wrote so many other things instead. The truth is that the novel as we know it could not have been conceived before 1865 because the situation of Russian culture that Dostoevsky could imagine as Raskolnikov had not existed before that time.

If we look at Russian culture in the early and mid-1860s—and this means, for our purposes, the doctrines of the radical intelligentsia—we can easily spot the "reality" that is incarnated in Raskolnikov. In the first place, all the radical intelligentsia were convinced that the theories of English Utilitarianism solved all the problems of ethics and personal conduct. This has caused a great deal of confusion because only in Russia do we find this peculiar blend of French Utopian Socialism, with its belief in the possibility of a future world of love and moral perfection, held conjointly with a view of human nature stemming from the egoistic individualism of Bentham and Mill. Even more, the Russian radicals believed in the doctrine of what they called "rational egoism" with their usual passionate extremism and fanaticism. To find anything similar to their belief in abstract reason as an infallible guide to the complexities of the moral life, we should have to go back to William Godwin. And I bring in Godwin's name here both because he had a direct influence in Russia through N. G. Chernyshevsky, the intellectual mentor of the radicals in the early 1860s, and also because the Russian cultural situation at this time closely parallels that

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of England in the period of the French Revolution.

Like Godwin, the Russians also strove to develop an ethics which—in the graphic words of Hazlitt's *The Spirit of the Age*—tried "to pass the Arctic Circle and Frozen Regions, where the understanding is no longer warmed by the affections...." And no better commentary has ever been written on *Crime and Punishment* than the passage in *The Prelude* where Wordsworth explains how abstract reason dupes itself in its dialectic with the irrational:

> *This was the time, when, all things tending fast*
> *To depravation, speculative schemes—*
> *That promised to abstract the hopes of Man*
> *Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth*
> *For ever in a purer element—*
> *Found ready welcome. Tempting region that*
> *For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,*
> *Where passions had the privilege to work,*
> *And never hear the sound of their own names.*

The last two lines of this passage define the theme of *Crime and Punishment* with far more exactitude than the mountain of critical literature on Dostoevsky. Indeed, if we are to understand the position of Dostoevsky and his intellectual allies (Apollon Grigoriev and Nikolai Strakhov) as they confronted the Russian radicals of the 1860s, we can do no better than to take as a guide the reaction of the first generation of English Romantics to the French Revolution. Moreover, if Godwin stimulated the radicals, then the works of Carlyle, who was an especial favourite of Apollon Grigoriev, furnished sustenance for the anti-radical camp.

THUS IT IS BY NO MEANS accidental that we find Raskolnikov's crime planned on the basis of a Utilitarian calculus; this was the very essence of the matter for Dostoevsky. And we see too that, exactly like Godwin, Raskolnikov believes that his reason can overcome the most fundamental and deeply rooted human feelings. Godwin argued, it will be recalled, that reason would (or should) persuade him to leave his mother or sister burning in a fire and rescue Fénelon instead because, as he writes in *Political Justice*, "the illustrious Bishop of Cambrai was of more worth" to humanity. Whatever a Freudian might think of this argument, Godwin believed that it followed with impeccable logic from a Utilitarian calculus taking as its ultimate standard the universal good of humanity. Raskolnikov's conviction that he would be able to commit a perfect crime is based, we should notice, on exactly the same type of reasoning.

Ordinary criminals, Raskolnikov had theorised, rob and steal out of need or viciousness; and they break down at the moment of the crime, leaving all sorts of clues scattered about, because they inwardly accept the justice and validity of the law they are breaking. The irrational forces of their conscience interfere with the rational lucidity of their action. But, he was convinced, nothing of the kind would happen to him because he knew that his so-called crime was not a crime. Reason had persuaded him that the amount of harm his crime would do was far out-weighed by the amount of good it would allow him to accomplish. Hence his irrational conscience would not trouble and distort his reason, and he would not lose control of his nerves and make blunders.

This is one way in which the very conception of Raskolnikov springs from the ideology of the Russian radicals in the mid-1860s, and shapes the basic psychological conflict in the book between reason and the irrational. But another essential ideological component is derived from the evolution of Russian left-wing ideas between 1860 and 1865. In this period, for various reasons, we find a shift from the ideals of Utopian Socialism, with its semi-religious glorification of the people, to that of an embittered élitism, which stressed the right of a superior individual to act independently for the welfare of humanity.

THE MOST IMPORTANT event in Russian culture between 1863 and 1865 was a public quarrel between two groups of radicals—the old Utopian Socialists, and the new Nihilists. Dostoevsky's magazine *Epoch* printed a number of articles analysing and commenting on this momentous dispute, and immediately recognised, with great perspicacity, that it marked a fateful moment in the evolution of radical ideas. "The sons have taken up arms against the fathers, one generation replaces another," ironically wrote Strakhov, then the chief critic of *Epoch*; "a thick journal, once progressive, has turned out to be backward, and in its place stands another thick journal, which has succeeded in going farther along the path of progress." Even more relevant is that Dostoevsky himself wrote an article about this internecine warfare between the radicals called "Schism (*Raskol*) Among the Nihilists"; and this is what the whole episode is still called in histories of Russian culture. All this was just a few months before Dostoevsky, after the collapse of *Epoch*, sketched out in a letter his idea for a story about a murder committed by a young student acting under the influence of certain "strange, incomplete ideas"; and we can, I think, relate

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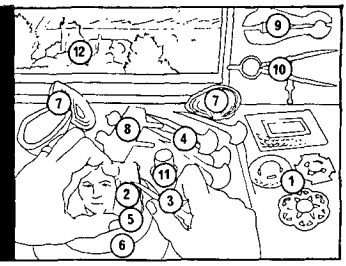
THE CELTIC JEWELLER



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The illustration shows him engraving the lid of a silver cigarette box **2** using one of his sharp 'gravers' or engraving tools **3** and **4**. His work is set up on a wooden block **5** and is raised to a comfortable working height on leather sandbags **6**. Much of his work is set with agate, pieces of which can be seen ready in **7** for slicing. Apart from a few hand tools such as soldering irons, hand vices **8** and **9**, scribing compasses **10** and a watchmaker's eye-glass for fine engraving **11**, John relies entirely on his own skill.

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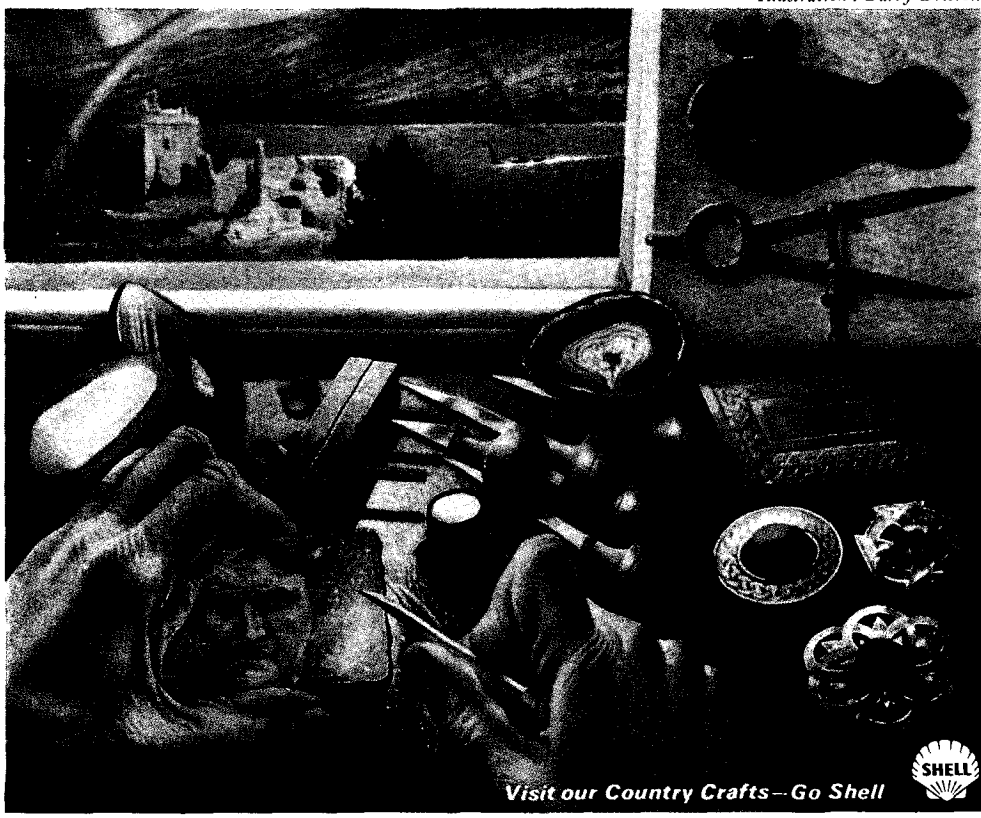

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this schism among the Nihilists to *Crime and Punishment* in two ways.

One is in the difference that Dostoevsky draws between the comic and harmless Utopian Socialist in the novel, Lebezyatnikov, and Raskolnikov himself, who is no longer a Utopian Socialist but a true Nihilist. The Utopian Socialist is in favour of peaceful propaganda, conversion to the cause by reason and persuasion (which is why he lends books to Sonia), and he believes that the salvation of humanity hinges on communal living arrangements. These matters had still been important just two years before, in the period of *Notes from Underground*; but things in Russia moved very fast, and it was now out-of-date. Raskolnikov looks on all this as ineffectual nonsense; he feels that time is running out, that it is necessary to act now and not be content with Utopian dreams of the future, and that the superior individual has the right and the obligation to strike a decisive blow by himself.

A second reflection of this new situation may be found in Raskolnikov's famous article *"On Crime."* For every idea in this text, it would be possible to supply a parallel quotation from *The Russian Word,* the "thick journal" that had become the Nihilist organ. The main spokesman for the Nihilists was Dimitri Pisarev, best known for his attacks on art as being useless—which is, of course, merely another application of the Utilitarian calculus. And if we go back and read Pisarev and his group, we find these undeniably genuine left-wing radicals exhibiting the utmost contempt for the people on whose behalf they presumably wish to change the world. We also find them using the arguments of Social Darwinism to establish the justice of the ineradicable distinction between the weak and the strong, and the *right* of the strong to trample on the weak and unworthy.

Indeed, one of the most pugnacious contributors to *The Russian Word,* Bartholomew Zaitsev, who later in exile became a follower of Bakunin, even defended Negro slavery on the ground that Negroes were biologically inferior and would otherwise be wiped out entirely in their struggle for life against the White race. This opinion was repudiated by the majority of the radicals, although Pisarev defended Zaitsev's premises if not his conclusions. Even though a minority opinion, however, this was exactly the sort of *consistent* application of Utilitarianism-cum-Nihilism that Dostoevsky believed revealed the true moral consequences of the new radical ideology. This context explains the "Nietzschean" aspects of Raskolnikov, which have been so often commented upon. Thomas Masaryk noted some of these "Nietzschean" elements in Pisarev and Russian Nihilism as far back as 1913, in his indispensable book *The Spirit of Russia*; but nobody has paid the slightest attention to them since, or brought them into any relation with Dostoevsky.

All this, I hope, has now placed us in a better position to understand what Dostoevsky was trying to do in *Crime and Punishment.* His aim, in my view, was to portray the inescapable contradictions in this radical ideology of Russian Nihilism. To do so, he adopted his usual procedure (in his mature work) of imagining its "strange, incomplete ideas" put into practice by an idealistic young man whose character traits embody its various conflicting aspects. Now Dostoevsky knew very well that the emotional impulses inspiring the average Russian radical were generous and self-sacrificing. They were moved by love, sympathy, altruism, the desire to aid, heal and comfort suffering—whatever they might believe about the hard-headedness of their "rational egoism." The underlying foundation of their moral nature was Christian and Russian (for Dostoevsky the two were the same), and in total disharmony with the superimposed Western ideas they had assimilated, and on whose basis they believed they were acting. Hence over and over again in Dostoevsky's major works we find him dramatising the inner conflict of a member of the Russian intelligentsia torn between his innate feelings and his conscious ideas, between the irrational (which, by the way, is never Freudian in Dostoevsky but always moral as in Shakespeare) and the amorality of reason in one form or another.

In *Crime and Punishment,* Dostoevsky set himself the task of portraying this conflict in the form of a self-awakening, the gradual discovery by Raskolnikov *himself* of the unholy mixture of incompatibles in his ideology. This is why Raskolnikov seems to have one motive for his crime at the beginning of the book and another towards the end, when he makes his famous confession to Sonia. Many critics have pointed to this seeming duality of motive as a weakness in the novel, an artistic failure on Dostoevsky's part to project his character unifiedly. On the other hand, Philip Rahv quite recently has maintained that this is precisely what makes the book great—that in failing to provide a clear and single motive Dostoevsky reveals "the problematical nature of the modern personality," or the startling fact "that human consciousness is inexhaustible and incalculable."

Both these views, however, are equally and

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egregiously wrong.[1] The whole point of the book lies precisely in the process by which Raskolnikov moves from one explanation of the crime to another, and in so doing discovers the truth about the nature of the deed he committed. Even without the historical background I have sketched in, this should be abundantly clear to anyone who has some respect for Dostoevsky's capacity as a craftsman, and who studies the curious and original construction of the first part of the novel.

Why, for example, does Dostoevsky begin his narrative just a day before the actual commission of the crime, and convey Raskolnikov's *conscious* motivation in a series of flashbacks? One reason, of course, is to obtain the brilliant effect of dramatic irony at the close of Part I. For the entire process of reasoning that leads to Raskolnikov's theory of the altruistic Utilitarian crime is only explained in detail in the tavern-scene, where Raskolnikov hears his very own theory discussed by another student and a young officer; and this scene is the last important one just before the crime is committed. (It may be well, incidentally, to recall that when the officer doubts the possibility of anyone committing such a crime, the student retorts that, if this were so, "there would never have been a single great man." The "great man" component of Raskolnikov's theory is thus there from the very first, and is not unexpectedly tacked on later.) Temporally, the tavern-scene and the murder itself are at the very opposite ends of a single time-sequence; but they are telescoped together deftly by Dostoevsky's narrative technique—and for a very important purpose. And if we grasp the thematic significance of Dostoevsky's dramatic irony here, I think it will give us a model to illuminate the whole vexed question of Raskolnikov's motivation.

THE PURPOSE of Dostoevsky's juxtaposition and telescoping of the time-sequence is obviously to undermine Raskolnikov's *conscious* motivation for the reader. The hypnotic hysteria in which he kills the old pawnbroker could not reveal more clearly, in an objective, dramatic fashion, that Raskolnikov's crime is not being committed according to his altruistic, Utilitarian theory. Whatever Raskolnikov may have believed about himself, he is now acting in the grip of other forces and not on the basis of the theory, which is still fresh in our minds because we have met it only a page or two before. Dostoevsky's technique is thus intended to force the reader, if he is at all attentive, to pose to himself the question of what Raskolnikov's *true* motive can possibly be.

Now I believe that the entire construction of the first part of the book is intended to give an answer to this question in the same objective, dramatic fashion. Part I consists of two alternating sequences of episodes. In one sequence, composed largely of flashbacks, we learn about Raskolnikov's past, his desperate family situation, and all the circumstances pushing him towards the crime. All these scenes build up the altruistic side of his character, and reinforce our sense of his essential goodness, humanity, and sympathy for suffering. It is this aspect of his nature which forever distinguishes him from a real criminal, and that makes him think of expiating his crime—if one can really call it a crime—by future services to humanity. But then we also see him in *action* in this part, in the series of episodes with Marmeladov and his family, and with the young girl on the boulevard. And in these scenes we notice a very significant dialectic occurring, which undermines the foundations of his altruistic, Utilitarian theory in exactly the same way as the later dramatic irony; this latter is, indeed, only the final crescendo of this whole masterly sequence.

In each of these episodes, Raskolnikov at first responds purely instinctively to the spectacle of human misery and suffering, and he spontaneously rushes to help and to succour. But at a certain point, a total transformation of his personality occurs from one moment to the next. Suddenly he withdraws, becomes indifferent and contemptuous, and instead of pitying mankind he begins to hate it for being weak and contemptible. In each case, this change of feeling is indicated to be the result of the application of a Utilitarian calculus. For example, he is starving and yet leaves all his money at the Marmeladovs; but as he walks out he begins to laugh at himself scornfully for this gesture. Why? Because, he thinks, "after all they have Sonia and I need it myself." This leads him into reflections on how despicable human beings are because they can become accustomed to any-

[1] Philip Rahv's useful essay, "Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*," has been widely reprinted and widely read since its original appearance in *Partisan Review* in 1960. It therefore seems advisable to correct an important error of fact that Mr. Rahv's essay has no doubt had the effect of propagating.

Mr. Rahv believes that he has discovered a long-overlooked "source" for Raskolnikov's theory of "the great man" in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. As evidence of Dostoevsky's acquaintance with this text, he cites a letter of Dostoevsky's (22 February 1854) in which, among a list of other books requested, Dostoevsky says "be sure to send Hegel, particularly Hegel's *Philosophy of History*...." A comparison with the original, however, reveals that Dostoevsky asked for Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and not the *Philosophy of History*.

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thing—like living off the income of a prostitute daughter.

THE SAME SITUATION occurs at greater length with the girl on the boulevard, who has clearly once already been violated and who is in danger of falling into the hands of another seducer. Raskolnikov at first springs to her aid, but then again turns away with a cold revulsion of feeling. "Let them eat themselves," he says to himself (after all, a good Darwinian sentiment). And then he ponders the Malthusian proposition that a "percentage" has to go that way anyhow for the protection of society, so that pity and sympathy are totally misplaced. The "percentage" theory has recently been traced in Russian scholarship to an article of Zaitsev's in *The Russian Word*, who used it for the philanthropic purpose of arguing that, since vice and crime were inevitable natural phenomena, it was wrong to punish their perpetrators. Dostoevsky's use of the same idea for Raskolnikov, however, is perhaps more logical in taking the greatest good of the greatest number as a standard.

Each step, then, in the *backward* process of revealing Raskolnikov's conscious, altruistic motive for the contemplated crime is accompanied by another episode moving *forward* in time that undercuts it, and that reveals the *true* effect of his ideas on his feelings. In each case the reader can see clearly that when Raskolnikov acts under the influence of his Utilitarian ideas, he unleashes in himself a cold and pitiless egomaniac who hates humanity although he continues to believe that he loves it. This repeated dramatic illustration of how Raskolnikov's ideas twist and distort his feelings may perhaps explain why even those critics who taxed Dostoevsky with inconsistency of motive have never gone so far as to claim that his supposed artistic lapse seriously damaged the novel. Clearly, these critics could feel the inner unity of Raskolnikov, even though, on the basis of their misreading of the book, it was impossible for them to explain what this unity was or how it was obtained.

I HAVE PERHAPS said enough now to explain why it is really no surprise when Raskolnikov confesses to Sonia that he had committed the crime for himself alone, and solely to see whether he was strong enough to have the right to kill. This is merely his own self-recognition of what Dostoevsky has been making the reader feel ever since the first pages of the book. Let me conclude, however, with a few more observations on Dostoevsky's extremely skilful handling of the relation between structure and theme in *Crime and Punishment*.

In Part II, Dostoevsky begins to close the gap that exists between the reader's awareness of Raskolnikov and Raskolnikov's awareness of himself. For in Part II, as he begins to recover from his illness, Raskolnikov starts to ponder all the anomalies of the crime and to realise that he no longer knows *why* it was committed. At this point he is confronted with his old article *"On Crime,"* which reveals to what extent egomania had always been an inseparable part of the Utilitarian love of humanity. Dostoevsky withholds the full development of this motif, though he had carefully foreshadowed it earlier, until it becomes relevant both to answer Raskolnikov's own questions about his crime and to crystallise and define the reader's earlier impressions. The experience of the crime, however, has now shown Raskolnikov that the feelings which inspired his altruistic love of humanity cannot co-exist in the same sensibility with those necessary to be a Napoleon, a Solon, or a Lycurgus. For the true great man, possessed by his sense of mission, cannot have any thoughts to spare for the suffering humanity on whom he tramples for their own future happiness.

Once Raskolnikov's original theory breaks apart in this way, he is then confronted with the choice between non-Utilitarian Christian love and self-sacrifice in Sonia or total amorality leading to self-destruction in Svidrigailov. The construction of the latter half of the book thus clearly reflects its purpose, which was to persuade Dostoevsky's readers among the radical intelligentsia that they had to choose between a doctrine of love and a doctrine of power. Both were embodied, as I have tried to show, in the strange mixture of impulses and ideas that went by the name of Russian Nihilism. And that Dostoevsky's attacks did have some effect may be indicated by the change that occurred in Russian radical ideology in the 1870s, when "rational egoism" was abandoned for a secularised Christian ethics of love.

AS A FOOTNOTE, let me add that I have always been intrigued by the information that the high-strung young Pisarev broke down and wept when he read *Crime and Punishment*. Was there any shock of recognition involved in this response? If so, it did not prevent him from immediately writing an article, which has since become a classic in Russian criticism, proving that Raskolnikov's crime was really caused by hunger and malnutrition.

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FILM

Tassels, and Other Gadgets

By David Sylvester

I GOT to the viewing theatre just after the show started, and I'd forgotten what was supposed to be on. Dean Martin was taking a bath with a girl called Lovey Kravezit. It was one of the spy spoofs, and he was being Matt Helm in an off-hand elder-statesmanish sort of way. The action was fast and clever, the colour bright and clean, the gadgets bright and dirty, and suddenly Cyd Charisse appeared (looking more human than she used to do), only to be shot dead while doing a song and dance in a night club, wearing a golden leotard hung with shimmering tassels, one of them dangling from her mount of Venus and all of them shimmying as she moved. But the most elating thing was how it all moved from one episode to another, cutting from each to the next without ceremony or sense. It was as snappy as *The Waste Land* compared to *Paradise Lost*, as bright as a TV commercial. I couldn't strictly follow what was happening, how the hero had got to wherever he was or became involved with whoever he was with, but the message was coming across subliminally and anyway there was the heady joy of yielding to that cool transcendence of continuity. I only wondered, since every sparkling idea seemed so expendable, how such invention could possibly be sustained for a couple of hours. Suddenly, after twenty minutes, a title flashed on to the screen: *The Silencers*. My God, I thought, if they've put all that before the credits, what can be coming after? And then the screen went blank. It had been a trailer assembled for the Press.... But a few days later I saw a whole picture that was almost as inconsequential: Louis Malle's *Viva Maria*, with Bardot and Moreau.

Summit-meeting movies, contrived in order to bring together rival super-stars, usually disappoint (by rivals I do mean stars of the same sex). Perhaps the way to make them work is not to conceal the point of the exercise—to make the real story of the film the showbiz story behind it. Certainly *Viva Maria* makes no pretence of being a film that might have been made with other stars. It's a kind of party in honour of France's leading ladies. So Malle as host does his bit by taking off some of the mannerisms of France's most honoured directors, Renoir, Clair and Vigo. The whole stance of the film is celebratory. It takes a Hollywood genre, the musical Western—a hybrid, indeed, of the two essentially Hollywood genres—and makes a Frenchified version of it, with oodles of *oo-la-la* and anti-clerical satire. Besides celebrating French culture, it celebrates the movies. See, it says, this bridge being blown up by a bomb: see how it has both verisimilitude and ideal beauty when rendered in Panavision and Eastman Colour. See, it says, how two prima donnas are actually having fun working together. See what goodies a single film can offer: women, wine, song, revolution, travel, torture, glamour, laughter, period flavour, love, death, dancing.

MALLE HAS DESCRIBED the film as a "Western in skirts." Its heroines are its heroes, proving their virility not only by winning a revolution but by steering clear of permanent entanglements, with the help of a destiny that kills Moreau's true love as it has killed many a woman for whom a Western hero's passion might have deflected him from the endless trail he has to pursue alone or beside his buddy. But this female virility is well in line with the conventions of the Hollywood musical Western.

In the straight Western, virility is only permitted to the nice attractive girl the hero never quite falls for, or to off-beat—and usually doomed—heroines played by Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, or Jane Russell. In the musical Western, however, a woman may be virile and the heroine and considered wholesome: as in, say, *Annie Get Your Gun*,

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where "Anything you can do I can do better" is the theme of a love duet. It was obligatory that in *The Plainsman* Jean Arthur should play Calamity Jane, that hairy-chested heroine of the Wild West, as if she were the girl next door; in the musical *Calamity Jane,* the still more wholesome Doris Day could do the name part at least boyishly; Dietrich herself is a more feminine sort of tough character in *Rancho Notorious* than she is in *Destry Rides Again.* The ritualistic framework of the musical—like that of opera or verse drama—admits what is unacceptable in more naturalistic contexts.

Usually the virility of Western heroines involves the wearing of male clothes—a natural enough thing to do anyway in the circumstances. Malle, however, gives an added piquancy to the super-mannishness of the Marias by having them wipe out numbers of uniformed men while clothed in exquisitely feminine fashions. But in her early scenes, Bardot is dressed like Jackie Coogan in *The Kid* (the uniform which Moreau put on for her transvestite turn in *Jules et Jim*). It is because Bardot is not used to wearing dresses that the two Marias come to invent the art of strip-tease (Moreau now returns that compliment by wearing Bardot's customary undress). Bardot discovers her femininity through uncovering it for others.

Still, the Marias' sexual attitudes are predominantly male. Moreau falls for George Hamilton only when able to assume the man's role: on first meeting him, she ignores his advances; she's not interested so long as he's active, only when he's captive. When he's imprisoned, legs shackled, arms bound to a yoke, she enters his cell and makes love to him, closing in as if she were Perseus and he Andromeda. (Given the anti-clerical mood of the film, this Maria is also presumably Mary Magdalene seducing Christ on the cross.) And Bardot enjoys the loss of virginity in a style that refutes her femininity: when the time has come for initiation, she leaves a party together with three men and is returned by the three of them to her caravan next morning. *"L'amour,"* she tells Moreau, *"c'est merveilleux!"* Male psychology is attributed to the female, as it is in pornography. The paradigm could be the deflowering of Eugénie in Sade's *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir,* where the lovely initiate, innocent as a daisy, avid of experience, infinitely responsive, is successfully and simultaneously pleasured by a beautiful woman, a handsome young nobleman, an ageing roué and a monstrously well-equipped gardener. Subsequently Eugénie brutalises her interfering mother: you could say that Bardot does as much in vanquishing the Church.

PORNOGRAPHY brings me back to the current spy pictures—or rather to the majority which are peculiarly different from earlier films about espionage or detection and can fairly be called "Bondian," since the genre came into being, in 1962, in the first of the James Bond series. An interesting feature of their rampant sexuality is the relatively secondary role sadism plays; in English-speaking films of the 1950s sadism was by a long way the most passionate form of sexual outlet (with the Mickey Spillane cycle its most extreme expression). The greater permissiveness towards sportive sex now current in the English-speaking world gives today's films more licence to show that sex can be pleasurable as well as damaging.

Nevertheless, the new permissiveness is less wholeheartedly indulgent towards sexual intercourse than towards occasions for voyeurism and other vicarious or fantasied activities—strip shows, girlie mags, bunny clubs, dirty books. And this is reflected in the Bondian films, which are not simply occasions for voyeurism but actively advertise its delights—insistently though rather covertly in *Our Man Flint,* more flagrantly in *The Silencers* (in the daring, quite dazzling, and wholly gratuitous strip-tease show superimposed on the credits), most explicitly in *From Russia with Love,* in a scene which the novel describes in these words:

> Above them, and unknown to both of them, behind the gold-framed false mirror on the wall over the bed, two photographers from SMERSH sat close together in the cramped *cabinet de voyeur,* as, before them, so many friends of the proprietor had sat on a honeymoon night in the stateroom of the Kristal Palas.
>
> And the view-finders gazed coldly down on the passionate arabesques the two bodies formed and broke and formed again, and the clockwork mechanism of the ciné-cameras whirred softly on and on as the breath rasped out of the open mouths of the two men and the sweat of excitement trickled down their bulging faces into their cheap collars.

Voyeurism is not only done but is seen to be done.

Kinkiness gets by in Bondian films precisely as it does in musicals—because the context is anti-realistic. The Bondian film, indeed, has all the musical's traditional ingredients: the extravagant sets, the luxurious living, the glorious colour, the bevies of beauties, the mistaken identities, even songs and dances. And the fights are a form of dance—here a duet in a hotel bedroom, there a big production number at the palace or the fiesta. The movie musical itself is a dormant form: the major musicals that have been made in recent years have been adaptations of old theatrical successes. The Bondian film has moved into that void, as an extension

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of the "virile," picaresque musical such as *On the Town*.

THE PORNOGRAPHIC ASPECT of the Bondian films is not, I think, confined to their treatment of sex. I want to suggest that their treatment of espionage itself is curiously analogous to pornography's treatment of sex, and that this is what gives these films their special flavour.

Bondian films are uninterested in building up suspense. They relish perfunctory tensions, as when the hero enters an empty room and assumes that an enemy is concealed behind an arras or is on the point of intruding—a disquiet usually resolved, with violence, in a couple of minutes. But Bondian films never have the patience to sustain suspense over a long period as it is sustained in earlier spy films as different as *The Manchurian Candidate* and *The Thief*, Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* and *The Lady Vanishes*, the Graham Greene-based *Ministry of Fear* and *Our Man in Havana* (or in the contemporary neo-Greenian piece, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*).

Pornography, similarly, has no time for suspense that is more than perfunctory (except, of course, when, as with *L'Histoire d'O* and *L'Histoire de l'Oeil*, it is also literature). It ignores the excitement uncertainty can bring to sexuality in the real world, prefers to make it a foregone conclusion that something will happen soon and give satisfaction all round. The Bondian film, like pornography, is greedy for action.

Bondian films are obsessed with gadgets. This is hardly surprising in view of the quantity and subtlety of the gadgets nowadays used in real-life espionage (or for that matter in the real life of the audience). So the gadgets both arouse boyish curiosity and, being seen masterfully used, allay womanish anxiety. They are symbols of up-to-dateness, and they provide surprises which can either tickle the audience's rib or kick it in the stomach. For TV series especially, with their rapid turnover of story material, the operating of gadgets can fill out a slender plot with meticulous detail that will hold the viewer as if hypnotised by the sight of men digging a hole in the road. They provide the hero who uses them coolly and efficiently with the means to demonstrate how at home he is in a highly sophisticated world, rather as he shows it by knowing how to order an epicurean dinner. And beyond that they provide the hero who questions his need of them with the means to demonstrate his self-sufficiency—as when Bond in *Thunderball* ribs the department's gadget expert about his latest baubles, or when Our Man Flint, on the point of going off to save the human race, declines the offer of an attaché case containing 64 secret weapons, fetches a lighter out of his own pocket and says, "This has 82 functions—83 if you want to light a cigar."

Since there are so many above-board reasons why gadgets should be prominent in Bondian films, it may not be significant that they have their counterparts in pornography. But, for what it's worth, it is a fact that pornography tends to regard the genitals as gadgets—detachable battery-driven toys, ingenious in design, dependable in performance.

BONDIAN FILMS are marked by an ambivalence—or a hedging of bets—by which they aim to be thrillers and spoofs at one and the same time. They are packed with convulsive action and luxurious sights; they glorify the physical prowess, the nerve, the wit, the sex-appeal, the drive, the appetite for risk, the boyish charm and brutality of the hero, they impel the audience to admire, envy, and identify. At the same time they are shamelessly preposterous to the point of farce, and full of irony and in-jokes at their own expense. This is not at all the ambivalence of a Hitchcock comedy-thriller. (It does, however, resemble the teasing atmosphere of *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* on TV, in which the films are neither by nor in the manner of Hitchcock, but are only sponsored and compèred by him, in a throw-away style that simultaneously conspires with and disdains us.) In a Hitchcock film the comedy is the reverse side of the terror and arises cruelly from the dramatic situation as if it were the laughter of the gods at man's ridiculous efforts to disentangle himself from his destiny. In the Bondian films the comedy is a comment from outside the situation—is most obviously this in Bond's sardonic asides about death or bed—a nudge in the ribs to assure you that the whole thing is a lark.

Only one other form of art or entertainment appeals to its audience in this two-faced way. Pornography transmits excitement to the point of provoking feelings which precisely match the feelings it describes. It arouses identification and compels envy: of the prowess and the opportunity. At the same time, the impossible deeds render the actors absurd, arousing a derision that dispels both envy and shame. In pornography and the Bondian film alike, the ambivalence relates to a sense of tacit conspiracy between manufacturer and consumer.

WHEN A NEW KIND of film comes in, it usually starts with a bang, fades to a whimper through over-exploitation. The Bondian film has been fairly decrepit since birth. The trouble has partly been that the crea-

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tive energy which begat the idea wasn't operating in the movie medium: it went into the Fleming novels, and from the first the films were an exploitation of something else's success.

Even so, it might have been expected that the stories would gain through realisation on the screen, considering that they seem constructed as if the author were thinking in cinematic terms, and that their merits lie in their action, not (as with Chandler, say, or Hammett) in sharpness of insight or stylish writing. In the event, the films have subtracted far more than they've added. In *Thunderball,* the most recent and most lamentable, all that is added is the elegant shooting of the underwater sequences. The biggest minus is the adaptation of the novel, which turns the plot into a chaos resembling a fitful, meandering, unmemorable, dyspeptic dream.

The problem of making a Bondian product work is largely one of getting the excitement and the amusement operating together, playing them off against each other in a kind of counterpoint, making now one now the other dominant, never entirely letting go of either. One reason why the Fleming books bring this off is that the author always keeps a straight face, neither laughing at his own jokes nor breathing too heavily over his hero's exertions (though he does tend to drool a bit over his menus). In the *Thunderball* film, the thrills are produced with the air of a triumphant conjuror and the laughs with the air of donning a funny hat.

It is as if the manufacturers, having bought the formula of an effective drug, thought it enough to serve up separate doses of each component ingredient. They presume, rather as the Bond of the films presumes in his way with women. The novels recognise that the successful lecher is one who knows he can get almost any woman and makes a woman realise that he knows it, but not by saying that he knows it, and least of all by saying that he knows she knows he knows it. But the screen Bond does let on, and by the same token his producers haven't the tact to keep it quiet that they take our complicity for granted.

Sad to say, they've so far been right: while they can rig their Bond's successes with women, they can't rig success at the box-office, yet the returns have justified their cocksureness. So feverishly do the public hunger for the Bondian ingredients that they have even enthusiastically swallowed the U.N.C.L.E. series—a lot of stale doughnuts coated with with-itry. What is remarkable is that they haven't only swallowed them on television but even in the cinema, where they have to pay to get in, where it's painfully obvious that the colour wasn't designed for the cinema but for colour TV, and where there are no commercials to hold up the stories and bring in a little suspense, as well as entertainment.

The best of the recent crop of Bondian films has been *The Silencers*. The film in its entirety, when I finally saw it, was of course decidedly less gripping than the trailer. But that, after all, is generally the case: trailers, beyond having pace and only the best bits, acquire, by limiting information, the poetic suggestiveness of the fragment. *The Silencers*, which Phil Karlson directed, has a nice battle, with automobiles ramming one another to the death, and an inspired gadget—a pistol which, when in your adversary's hands, fires backwards. It even provides, in Stella Stevens, an interesting heroine. This has not been done, it seems to me, by any other Bondian film for the cinema (including *Blindfold*—a blend of the Bondian with old-fashioned romantic comedy—for which they hired Claudia Cardinale).

The British TV series, *The Avengers,* has supplied the most intriguing Bondian heroines yet. Honor Blackman's Mrs. Gale had the mystery of a tolerant woman of long and wide experience; her successor—Diana Rigg's Mrs. Peel—had the mystery of a woman the extent of whose experience is mysterious. It has helped, of course, that neither has been seen to be or to have been involved with the hero, yet their conspiratorial relationship with him has seemed more than professional. Mrs. Gale was a remarkably attractive character; if one liked Mrs. Peel almost as much, it was partly out of sympathy with Miss Rigg's efforts to fill Miss Blackman's place. One felt especially protective when she was trying to emulate the judo bit, not gliding into it like a leopard the way Miss Blackman used to do, but having to take a deep breath first, like a small girl about to go in off the high board.

One of the things that differentiate Bondian from earlier spy stories is playing patriotism fairly cool. Bond himself from time to time, when tempted to chase a girl instead of the enemy, gets his priorities right by remembering Her Majesty. But shameless jingoism is out. Some of the Bondian spies are employed by imaginary international organisations such as U.N.C.L.E. Again, the enemy is rarely identified with a particular foreign state, is usually an international combine of ambitious crooks or maniacs. Partly this is a reflection of the new Soviet-American *rapprochement,* partly a reflection of nostalgia for free enterprise: in the delightful *Thunderbirds* (a British TV series of SF-espionage puppet-films), the earth is pre-

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served from Martian invasion by "International Rescue," an organisation run by an American and his five sons—a nice family business.

A new British film, *Where the Spies Are*, reverts to traditional patterns—to traditional Cold War politics (a Russian airliner on an international peace mission is a front for top-level espionage) and to the glorification of the traditional British virtues of amateurism and muddling-through against the odds. The Secret Service, short-handed in the Middle East, persuade a country doctor (David Niven), who as a wartime officer once did a job for Intelligence, to do temporary duty. The film goes rather well while it's working out how an unschooled novice might behave, especially towards a sexy lady spy. The story runs out of steam and plausibility half-way through, but in any case the film is doomed by taking itself too seriously for a story so riddled with clichés.

The most ideological of the Bondian films is the one which presents itself as the biggest spoof: *Our Man Flint*. It's as much a science-fiction as a spy film, and it follows the custom of using SF as a medium for political allegory. Some of its wheezes are extremely bright. There's a pretty send-up of Bond's expertise when Flint deduces from the smell of garlic, saffron, and fennel on the feathers of a poisoned dart that it must have been fired by someone who had lately been eating bouillabaisse in Marseilles. There's a fight to the death in a w.c. which attains the elusive ideal Bondian blend of the vicious and the preposterous. But the film becomes a bore because Flint is such a super-mind in such a super-body that no ingenuity is needed to effect his victories and escapes: we may be sure that a hero is going to win, but we want to be made to wonder how.

Flint stands for American individualism. The enemy, a trio of scientists threatening to take over the world, stand for benevolent totalitarianism. "Ours would be a perfect world," one of them tells Flint, who replies that he must fight it "because it's your idea of perfection, not mine." The budding Utopia we are shown is strongly Huxleyan. Flint demolishes it with a little help from the U.S. Navy.

It may be interesting to compare this new ideal American (played by James Coburn) with his predecessor of the 1940s, Batman, who has lately been resuscitated for laughs. Batman looks as if he was sired by Dracula out of Momma Bear; Flint as if by Pinkerton out of Madam Butterfly. Batman is accident-prone, stupid, an amateur and a gentleman; Flint is invulnerable, omniscient, a professional and a cad. Batman when in mufti loves a girl who loves Batman and doesn't know that he is Batman: he can't divulge his secret and nothing happens. Flint has four attendant nymphs at the beginning of the film and by the end a fifth. In the 'forties to be a hero was its own reward; in the 'sixties it's a paying proposition.

Aries

The ram, my sign, wheels into his own now
Gallivanting at the year's circumference,
Influential if indifferent to
The new season's anachronistic dance.

As ever, sun hoses grass, ploughland and flowers
And something begins to lilt a green rhythm,
Restores the pigment, retraces contours.
Even I retrieve my origin

For I am a spoke the old ram turns up,
Following myself, like his horn's tight whorl,
Grateful to re-enter this April landscape.
It is the solid felloe of my world.

Seamus Heaney

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NOTES & TOPICS

Poets in Conference

POETS are popularly supposed to be unsociable beings, doomed to sit at home and distil their genius drop by drop. The idea of a "poetry conference" therefore strikes many people as blasphemous, like the idea of a herd of unicorns. The goings-on at the much-publicised conference of Commonwealth poets held at Cardiff last year have perhaps served to confirm this impression, already of long standing. It was therefore bold of the Trent Bookshop in Nottingham to summon another meeting of poets a month ago—a conscious attempt to redeem the disaster of Cardiff.

The Trent Bookshop is determinedly *avant-garde*, and this was, perhaps, the first attempt to gather together all the poets who in some way feel themselves exiled from the current establishment in poetry. Here were the provincial messiahs; the editors of smudgy duplicated magazines; the poets who are much talked about, but who somehow never manage to turn up at the bottom of a column in a weekly review. In fact, here was a whole world in revolt against the "gentility principle." It was a good opportunity to take a look at those things in English poetry which have never managed to establish themselves on any kind of national scale, and to see if there was an alternative to the existing order. The occasion was the more interesting because it happened at a moment when, for the first time since the war, there is a real sense that English literature is splitting in two, with one half espousing totally different standards to those which are approved by the other.

The conference at Nottingham fell into two parts—a recital on a Friday evening at the city's own Albert Hall (a name which now has nostalgic overtones for the *aficionados* of poetry recitals), and a series of discussions held the following Saturday at the Midland Group Gallery across the way. The evening recital did in fact follow very much the pattern set by Allen Ginsberg and his allies in London last June. Adrian Mitchell, one of the stars of the original Albert Hall reading, gave a rousing repeat performance of his by now very famous poem about the war in Viet Nam:

You put your bombers in, you put your conscience out,
You take the human being and you twist it all about

So scrub my skin with women
Chain my tongue with whisky
Stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Viet Nam.

But he was matched by readings from a handful of poets who, for me at least, represented something entirely new—members of the so-called "Liverpool pop" movement who have followed the Beatles into the clubs and dance-halls of Merseyside. Texts of their work are difficult to find because this is, essentially, oral poetry, so I will quote two poems in full. Both were read by their respective authors at Nottingham. First, "The New *Our Times* (For Félix Fénéon)" by Adrian Henri:

1.

At 3 p.m. yesterday, a Mr. Adolphus Edwards, a Jamaican immigrant, was pecked to death by a large bronze Eagle in Upper Parliament St. A U.S. State Dept. spokesman said later, "We have no statement to make at this time."

2.

Police-constable George Williams, who was partially blinded by a 15-lb. jellybaby thrown at a passing pop-singer, is to be retired on half-pension.

3.

Bearded Liverpool couple put out of misery in night by drip oil-heater, court told.

4.

A certain Mrs. Elspeth Clout, of Huyton, was killed by an unidentified falling object. It was thought to be a particularly hard stool evacuated from the toilet of a passing aeroplane.

5.

2 chip-shop proprietors were today accused of selling human ears fried in batter. One of them said, "We believe there is room for innovation in the trade."

6.

Fatality in Kardomah bomb outrage: Waitress buried alive under two thousand Danish pastries.

7.

At the inquest on Paul McCartney, aged 21, described as a popular singer and guitarist, P.C. Smith said, in evidence, that he saw one of the accused, Miss Jones, standing waving blood-stained hands, shouting, "I got a bit of his liver."

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My second example is brief. It is a poem laconically entitled "Boiler," by Spike Hawkins:

Pig sit still in the strainer
Pig sit still in the strainer!
I do like my pig tea.

The mixture of protest and sophisticated goonery in these poems is, of course, nothing new. But they do sum up what turned out to be one of the main confrontations at Nottingham—the contrast between a deliberate reversion to regionalism, and poetry written in a mid-Atlantic accent. Indeed, at the discussions and readings certain of those present spoke with an American intonation which was never theirs by birth; and a moment at once significant and comic occurred when a panel of poets debated, in a manner identical to that of a bench of bishops, the vexed question of whether Robert Creeley's work could satisfactorily be read aloud by an English voice.

If the comment above suggests that the *avant-garde* also has its orthodoxies, let me report that this is in fact the case. The crowded discussions at Nottingham turned out to be an encounter between a number of main groupings—the concrete poets, the beat-regionalists, and the Black Mountaineers. The first group was the most international in its outlook, the second the most incoherent, and the third the most rigid. But they all seemed to share a liking for the prepared position, an unwillingness to admit that poetry could exist in a sphere other than the one which a particular priesthood had marked out for it. A genuine interest in experiment seemed in almost all cases to take a secondary place.

This is a harsh verdict, and it is only fair to report the presence of a number of mavericks, and also that there were some extenuating circumstances. A comment of my own, for example, provoked a reading of perhaps the most heart-felt protest poem of them all: "reading the *Observer* and absorbing its high tone." The author and reader was Michael Shayer, who is generally classified as a disciple of the Black Mountain and Charles Olson. I venture to quote it in part:

It's alright, you bastards,
when some Russian
or a New York Jew

shouts out in poetry
then, you think it's colourful
you even print translations (poor ones)
in your bloody papers

when it suits your book
to feel superior and to
sneer
at transatlantic
barbarians unknowingly
giving the American show away
or at the Russian at the one time
making the rebel-act
shaking down his Commissars
and writing bad poems....

Such moments of pure spontaneity were, however, depressingly few and far between. Indeed, I can only remember two others—one a superb surrealist telephone-call, long-distance to Woolwich Arsenal, by a poet suddenly seized with the desire to buy a rocket ("Sorry, sir, I'm afraid we can't take cheques from people we don't know.") and the other an improvised simultaneous reading of Bob Cobbing's sound-poem "panzoo-logico-minera-logia." This, shouted by twenty or thirty people into a cowering tape-recorder, produced a noise which a B.B.C. official present averred to be just like the record in the Broadcasting House archives labelled "Doubtful Crowd." Not a bad epitaph on the entire event, perhaps.

But one thing Nottingham did make very plain—the days when all the modern poetry in England was being written by a creature called the Larkin-Hughes-Gunn are long since over. Whatever comes next won't be nearly so easy to classify.

Edward Lucie-Smith

Hating the City

THE IMAGE OF THE CITY, *The Exploding Metropolis, The Twilight of Cities, The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, these are a few of the growing number of books in which Americans grapple urgently and intensely with their urban situation. We could add to the list *The Intellectual versus the City*, by a Harvard philosopher and his wife, Morton and Lucia White.[1] Urbanisation has of course been a protuberant feature of American history. Though the statistical distinction between urban and rural areas is somewhat misleading,[2] no one

[1] It has just been re-issued as a Mentor paper-back by the New American Library (75 cents, 6s.).

[2] The 1870 decennial census, the first to present official figures of urban population in the United States, classified as "urban" all cities and towns with a population exceeding 8,000. Other areas were "rural." The dividing line fluctuated thereafter between 8,000 and 4,000, until the 1900 census.

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can doubt that the great majority of Americans now live in cities, towns, and suburbs; that the proportion continues to increase; and that a century ago things were very much the other way round. So, according to the Whites, we might expect American intellectuals to show a close and on the whole sympathetic interest in their growing cities, since this growth is so central to the national experience and since cities are indispensable to the functioning of intellectual life.

What the Whites find, however, is that their picked team of American intellectuals, from Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright, have either detested or disliked the city. The authors concede that the testimony is not quite unequivocal or unanimous. In his later years Jefferson admitted that America might need some urban manufacturing centres, when once he had shuddered at the prospect. A few men such as Whitman or William James were prepared on occasion to be positively enthusiastic. But in general the record looks strikingly lop-sided. Emerson and Thoreau? Dwellers in Concord village, wanderers in the woods. Melville, Hawthorne, Poe? Fantasists of city corruption. Henry Adams? A sour-puss, loathing New York and associating it, in his nasty rationale of displaced Anglo-Saxondom, with conclaves of Jewish bankers. Henry James? Another who could not stomach New York. William Dean Howells? Disenchantment again; and in his utopian novels, *A Traveller from Altruria* and *Through the Eye of a Needle*, a dream of the good life in cities that have been turned inside out—small, decentralised, semi-rural. Similar disappointment and revulsion, though no panaceas, in the novels of Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser. Reformers, urban sociologists, philosophers—Jane Addams, Robert Park, Frederick Howe, John Dewey, Josiah Royce? Varying shades of indignation and resignation, all favouring a fragmentation of the metropolis into smaller "organic" units: crusades to make the world safe for the primary group, the "face-to-face" contact.

Casting about for contrary evidence, the reader thinks of old Oliver Wendell Holmes ("Boston is the hub of the universe") or of O. Henry for whom New York was "Baghdad-on-the-Subway" (Arabian nights, not execution dawns). The Whites will have none of this—boosters, sentimentalists, they tell us. Or what of Lewis Mumford, an American and the world's most distinguished chronicler of urban evolution? At heart a city-hater, the Whites maintain: a man who has compared the city to a neurotic person, much as earlier American intellectuals referred to it as a "cancer" or a "tumour" (*i.e.*, non-organic, abnormal, malignant).

The Whites are equally agile in anticipating other doubts. They observe that the American city has vastly altered in scale from the modest days of 1800, when New York had a mere 60,000 inhabitants, and that the pattern of antipathies has altered correspondingly. They make a useful division between the pre-Civil War era when the common intellectual complaint, a Romantic one, was that the city was over-civilised (not-Nature, not-the-Wilderness), and the post-1865 years when refined sensibilities like Henry James' found the American city not civilised enough. In the final few pages they reveal their hand by arguing that the early romanticist, anti-European, moralistic denunciation of the city ought no longer to be held binding. Nations are not, or should not be, prisoners of their own hoary traditions. This I think is the Whites' main point, and one worth making in a country that clings so tenaciously to its articles of popular faith, and that is still so overweighted, in the distribution of political power as well as in folklore, in the interests of ruralism. The book may be seen then as an ingenious, readable urban manifesto.

YET DOUBT PERSISTS. The category of "intellectual" is as elusive as that of "city." The authors are content in both cases with a working definition. With the intellectuals, we see that they have fastened upon a sort of first eleven of prominent Americans, in the belief that those selected are also select. But the effect seems random and un-unified. There are different levels of comment, different degrees of involvement. Thus, imaginative writers are ambiguous witnesses. They speak with several tongues, and unless we know a great deal about the individual writer's career and convictions we should beware of identifying the observations of one character with those of his creator. We must ask —as the Whites do not, for example, in discus-

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Places were then defined as "urban" if they had 2,500 or more inhabitants. This figure of 2,500 has been retained in subsequent censuses, though with some allowance in the 1950 census so as to embrace suburban settlement.

The results of these dividing lines would be, it appears:

(a) to exaggerate and distort the admittedly swift rural—→urban transition in the 1890s and thereafter;

(b) to classify as urban, especially since 1900, many communities that have marked rural features. In the eyes of the traveller such places seem to be enveloped and almost obliterated by the wheat or corn of endless farmland.

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sing Howells—*Who is speaking? The author? All of him? A bit of him?* In some novels Howells provided a liberal forum for extreme or advanced ideas, without committing himself irrevocably to any of them. He entertained them. As for Norris and Dreiser (better fitted for an intellectual second eleven?), at least on the evidence proffered, we seem to have a pair of men intimidated by Manhattan rather than hostile to cities in themselves.

Another difficulty with imaginative writers, viewed as intellectuals, is that they work within a set of ancient contrasts and symbols, which could be called anachronistic or could be defended as timeless. The urban-rural contrast is one of the oldest and most compelling. Every national literature is rich in explorations of the clash between rural innocence and urban depravity. The outcome may be a happy, and symbolic, renunciation of city glitter in favour of solitude and simplicity; or a more sombre initiation in and surrender to sophisticated vices. Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe inherited their methods of reacting to the city. The significance of their verdicts for their contemporaries is almost impossible to assess. Does *Père Goriot* make a country-lover out of Balzac?

Other questions are raised by the book's treatment of the past sixty or seventy years, which are harder to handle and more important than the venerable Jeffersonian set of agrarian preferences. Except briefly and a little slightingly, the Whites do not examine the clustering of intellectuals (in part through Jewish immigration) in American cities. Today the intellectual is more likely than the average citizen to install himself near the centre of the city, so as to be in what he regards as the thick of things. He is less likely to be found in what he regards as the thin of things—namely, the suburbs, the fringes, the back country. The record of his escape from Winesburg or other stultifying origins, along main-travelled roads, his siege of the metropolis, his bitter-sweet discovery that you can't go home again: these are primary data in the history of the American intellectual since the Civil War.

The Whites might answer that they are not writing that particular story. Fair enough, perhaps. But I think they run into difficulties through not establishing several successive definitions of the term "city." They recognise an aspect of the problem in remarking that one must "distinguish a distaste for the city as the city happens to be, and a distaste for the city as such." However, they are not always able to preserve the distinction. The biographical sequence gets in the way of a full consideration of the actual conditions of American cities in the period of most hectic growth: the corruption, the slums, the dislocation of society, the sheer ugliness. William Morris and John Ruskin, who were often cited by American reformers, saw the same process in England a generation earlier and were no less appalled. Perhaps the spectacle was even more depressing to the sensitive American. His new cities were raw brick encampments dumped on a landscape. For all their monotonous squalor, Manchester, Leeds, or Birmingham did have some vestigial association with older days: not so the American Porkopolises. One need not be a morbid aesthete in the America of 1890 to find the new cities more alarming than exhilarating. Much about them *was* gross and soulless. What Gertrude Stein later said about Oakland, California, could have been said quite justly about a dozen cities of the 1890s (though perhaps not about New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, or San Francisco): "There is no there there."

The English reformers, leading up to Patrick Geddes, concluded that the modern city was a failure. The Americans who followed in their wake—a larger crowd of reformers, sociologists, and planners than can be accommodated in this book—more or less agreed. On both sides of the Atlantic the typical recommendation was for a planned instead of a fortuitous city, which was to be more human in scale and atmosphere. If we define "city" as a dense agglomeration of people with widely diversified employments and tastes, and emphasise *density*, then the Whites' thesis holds up. We may then agree that Frank Lloyd Wright and the rest have in effect plotted the destruction of the classical urban environment. The obvious answer is that this environment was itself almost annihilated by the industrial city of the 19th century. Have Edward Bellamy and his successors—men fascinated by cities, their defects and their possibilities—been looking backward sentimentally, or looking ahead for genuinely new solutions? What *is* "the city as such"?

For planners the dilemma is acute: how to combine metropolitan amenity with small-town tranquillity, how to have a decently uncrowded city that does not leak away over the horizon to merge with yet another city. Other intellectuals have been understandably puzzled, and understandably querulous; for a good many years metropolitan life has seemed at once essential and intolerable. The Whites are admirably lucid. Perhaps they are more lucid than the record warrants.

Marcus Cunliffe

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International Commentary

The Legal and the Arbitrary

An Open Letter to Mr. Kosygin — By LEONARD SCHAPIRO

London, April 1966

DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

I have only one claim to your attention—that of a student of political societies, and particularly of Soviet society, who has written a certain amount about the history of your Communist Party. I am aware that your historians of the Party do not think very much of me—if you ask for their opinion of me it will not, I fear, be very flattering. That is, however, natural enough. Unlike theirs, my judgments have not been dictated by the fashion imposed by the political myth which happens at any one period to be in force in your country. At the time when Stalin was being deified in the U.S.S.R., for example, I was under no compulsion to restrict myself to praise of his divine attributes. I have felt similarly free about Lenin and about Khrushchev. If you reflect a moment, you will see that there may be some advantages about academic freedom in these matters now that for a few moments I am addressing myself to your own record as a political leader. (Incidentally, if you do happen to ask your party historians for their opinion of my work, you may find it amusing to ask them why it is, if I am indeed such a falsifier of your party's history as they often allege, that scarcely any new version of the official Soviet history of the CPSU omits to incorporate, without acknowledgement of course, some facts and judgments lifted from my books.) I am, however, confident that you will not ignore this letter. For it contains some advice offered in a spirit of help. And a wise statesman (and such, some appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, I still believe you to be) does not refuse to listen to advice from any quarter, whether he acts on it or no.

Perhaps our Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, has already given you some advice on his recent visit; I doubt it, but even if he has, I can in all modesty claim that we professors of politics sometimes have something to offer which would not occur to our leading politicians, of any party. The truth is that in Britain we don't really like politicians to be too intelligent—we feel safer with them as they are. (You have only to recall Stalin to see what I mean: his failings were serious enough to make two hundred million of your fellow citizens, and no doubt yourself, go through hell for several decades, but lack of intelligence was not one of them.) Now one of the simple facts that our politicians have been unable to grasp for the past fifty years is that when dealing with hard-headed materialists like the leaders of the Soviet Union, no amount of criticism of Soviet behaviour by visiting Britons is going to affect serious issues like trade. This must seem as ridiculous to you as it seems to me—but there you are. And I don't have to tell you how much importance our Prime Ministers, and particularly our Socialist Prime Ministers, attach to ensuring that our largest and richest capitalists should put through the most enormous deals with you. So it is unlikely, for example, that you have heard from Mr. Wilson just quite how much harm has been done to the reputation of your administration among the British public by the way in which in the past year you seem to us to have been allowing the KGB to run riot. Why, we ask ourselves, does this apparently sensible and practical man, who seems to be fully in control of the situation, allow the KGB to do what it pleases? Is he in reality under the control of people like Shelepin and Semichastny merely because they once helped him to get rid of Khrushchev—as some commentators on the Soviet scene suggest? Or, can it really be true, as others have suggested, that sensible Mr. Kosygin is allowing all this freedom of action to his policemen because he doesn't think it matters and just hopes that it will keep them

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quiet? I trust I can convince you, in your own interest as well as ours, that in either case you are riding for a fall.

LET ME FIRST REMIND YOU of just a few of the nastier KGB exploits of the past year. There was the Brooke case—after all, you know as well as we all do the extent to which that was a KGB frame-up. No doubt you or your predecessor took a chance that Sir Alec Douglas-Home or Harold Wilson was not John F. Kennedy so far as courage and political skill were concerned (it was a good chance, I fear); and so were persuaded by the KGB that their little operation for the recovery of some of your convicted spies could never cause any ripple on the smooth surface of cultural relations with Britain. (You recall, do you not, how rapidly a threat by the late President Kennedy to the late Mr. Khrushchev—I mean politically "late"—to put an end to U.S.-Soviet cultural relations, secured the release of Professor Barghoorn, whom the KGB had tried to frame in similar manner?) Then there is the "suicide" of poor Mr. Mott—*pour encourager les autres,* it would appear; the consigning to lunatic asylums of poets and writers, including at least one school-girl; and latterly the real masterpiece of the late Mr. Vyshinsky's strange art—the "trial" of Sinyavsky and Daniel. I imagine that even your informants in Britain must have given you some idea of the deplorable effect on our public opinion of this "trial." Even our extreme left-wingers, who are usually prepared to explain away anything disagreeable in Soviet life, from concentration camps to the weather, by blaming it on the Americans, have been very sharply and rudely critical of you. Few of us, it is true, take much notice of our left extremists; but after all you are, as it were, professionally interested in them. Mr. Prime Minister, I repeat—why have you allowed this to go on?

I MUST CONFESS that I find it hard to accept the theory that you are a "prisoner" of the KGB—that Shelepin and his friends in the KGB helped you (and I suppose Mr. Brezhnev too) to get rid of Mr. Khrushchev when his back was turned; and that they are now exacting their price. I can well believe that you called in their help. But why on earth should you, in the jungle world of politics, go on paying the price so long after the event? But whatever the explanation, I can assure you that your well-wishers, among whom I count myself, view the continued influence of Shelepin and the KGB in the political life of your country with dismay. Consider your position for a moment. Here are Shelepin and Semichastny, both of whom owed their entire political careers to Mr. Khrushchev, ready at the drop of a hat to turn against their patron, betray him, and attach themselves to another. What possible safeguard can there be for you that they will not plot to do the same against you with *X* or *Y,* who is prepared to offer them even better terms than you?

The simple truth is, I am afraid, something that students of politics have known for centuries: that the only safeguard against the sudden removal, fall and eclipse, if not death, of any ruler or political leader is a properly institutionalised legal system, with free elections, parliament, independent courts, free press, in fact all those "bourgeois" devices which you Communists claim to despise. (If you don't believe me, why not ask Dr. Nkrumah for his views?) Of course the disadvantage of the "bourgeois" system is that the rulers tend to get rather less power while it lasts. But at all events they do not usually have to end their days either as living corpses (like Mr. Malenkov, if indeed he is still "living") or in enforced silence, while their reputations are being unpicked by their successors, like Mr. Khrushchev.

However, I am not primarily concerned to convert you to the virtues of free government—that is, after all, a matter of taste. I really want to tell you, if indeed it is the case that the KGB has you at its mercy, that your position can hardly be regarded as secure; that I think this is a pity because you have in so many ways shown yourself to be much more sensible than any of your predecessors, from Lenin onwards; and that you really ought to be thinking hard what you can do about it. (May I suggest that you would always find the army leaders only too willing to lend a helping hand against the KGB?)

But, as I say, I do not subscribe to the "prisoner" theory myself. I think it more probable that you are content to leave certain areas which you consider relatively unimportant to the Party and their hangers-on, the KGB, so long as you are left alone in the spheres which you believe to be all-important. To the Party and KGB such matters as persecuting religions, framing foreign tourists, rounding up dissident students, and hounding the writers; to the government machine—which you now really seem to control—such serious matters as planning, industry, trade, and foreign relations. Of course, this "bargain" is only my hypothesis, though if I were not afraid of boring you, I could cite some evidence in support.

Actually, the 23rd Congress of your Party which has just concluded its labours illustrated the new division of functions very well. The main and detailed exposition of the economic plans for the future was correctly left to you, and not, as hitherto, to the General Secretary.

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Incidentally, I wonder if Mr. Brezhnev is really proud to bear this historic, if somewhat tarnished, title? Its revival is perhaps a salutory reminder to you of what is likely to happen to your office (and no doubt yourself) if Mr. Brezhnev should in the future grow tired of the amicable arrangement on the division of functions which seems to have been arrived at between the two of you. After all, whose side do you think the KGB will be on, if it should come to a trial of strength between the two of you?

I CAN QUITE SEE that to you, as a "practical" man, this bargain must look like an ideal compromise. Let me as a student of politics give you a few reasons why I think that such a compromise is very unlikely to endure. One is the likely growth of the KGB's appetite for power—do I have to remind someone who lived through Stalin's epoch of this simple fact? And do you really think that if it should prove necessary you have Stalin's skill and ruthlessness for forcing that terrible engine to do your will and not its own? And who do you think will survive in such a trial of wills—you or the KGB? Let me give you another reason. The areas which fall to the sphere of the Party *cum* KGB in your compromise may indeed seem unimportant and irrelevant to a great master of superplanning, such as you are reported to be. But are they? Have you paused to consider the extent to which the suppression of religious and cultural freedom increases ferment, dissatisfaction, and eventually opposition in all ranks of society? The Russian people is certainly long-suffering—too long-suffering, some of us think, for self-respect. Even so, are you sure that this generation is the same as that of Stalin's day—the "frightened for all time," as they were called? (You will recognise the Russian phrase —*navsegda zapugannye*—I have in mind.)

I am not suggesting that you are facing the prospect of a mass revolt—after all, what are the police for, in a modern dictatorship? (And the Soviet Army certainly has never shown the kind of impatience with corruption and tyranny which does credit to some of the African generals.) No, I am not talking of revolt. But purely as an administrative problem, in the interests of efficiency alone, it is surely easier to run a contented than a discontented country. The more alienated the population, the more you have to drive them—that was after all the progress from NEP to Stalin. And I am sure you will agree that in any case an attempt to repeat the Stalin experiment is a little unlikely in this day and age—and even if it were likely, it is obvious that it would not be you who would be in charge of this operation, but someone a good deal tougher. So once again let me warn you in all earnestness—look to your Shelepins! And remember that NEP—which was Lenin's desperate remedy against the excesses of party dogma—included not only material incentives, such as you are trying to provide. NEP in Lenin's conception included "class peace" for at least a generation; and in practice permitted a degree of academic and cultural freedom, while it lasted, such as the Soviet Union has never known since.

Perhaps Lenin is a bad authority to quote—he was, after all, a revolutionary rather than a statesman. Let me offer you a rather more dialectical argument.

Two principles seem to me to be in opposition and conflict in Soviet life today. On the one hand, there is your world—the world of planning, of industry, of efficiency, of rationalisation of world conflicts. This is the world where the principles which operate, or which should operate if success is to be achieved, are order, certainty, regularity, predictability. In a word—law. On the other side is the world of the Party and the KGB—the arbitrary, the unpredictable, the uncertain, the personal, the dictatorial. You may never have thought of it in this way, but is it not the case that without regularity, certainty, and predictability (which means without Party interference, in practice) there is little hope of real advance in the direction of efficiency such as you obviously desire? It was not for nothing that Marx, who was often right in his analysis (though I have no doubt that in your heart of hearts you rather despise Marx), closely associated the development of legal order with the growth of the bourgeoisie, industry, and trade. The two principles, the Legal and the Arbitrary, are in irreconcilable conflict. The important point for you to remember, if I may advise you once again, is that what you stand for can only be advanced by the legal principle. It amounts to this: if you are not persuaded in the interest of your personal safety that you must put a curb on police illegality, then you must at all events recognise that such a curb is demanded by the interests of business efficiency.

I AM AFRAID that your Party Congress, which has just concluded its labours, does not lead me to suppose that you have as yet grasped the importance of the point which I have been trying to make. Certainly, both Mr. Brezhnev and you deserve all credit for the success with which the Congress was organised. To Mr. Brezhnev goes the credit for packing it with delegates who could be relied on to mix a pennyworth of approved criticism with an in-

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tolerable deal of Communist self-congratulation ("com-boasting," as Lenin used to call it). Honest critics, like Mr. Alexander Tvardovsky, late of the Central Committee, were carefully excluded. But you, I think, must also be given some of the credit for the considerable success in restoring some semblance of international unity among the "fraternal delegates," which China's old-fashioned Communism had so rudely shattered. I hope the price in terms of aid and men to the Viet Nam battlefield and other areas of Communist subversion is not going to prove too high—or, for all our sakes, too dangerous.

The disturbing feature of this Congress—disturbing for you, I mean—is the extent to which it marks the growing ascendancy of the arbitrary element—the KGB, *"partiinost,"* and all the rest of it. It is foolish to talk of a "return to Stalinism"—happily, Stalins are rare. But it certainly seems plain that the Party and the KGB have successfully reasserted their claim to put an end even to the limited tolerance of dissent and variety which you inherited from Mr. Khrushchev. "Organisational deductions" have followed without delay—already accounts are reaching us in London of new arrests of writers. If Mr. Shelepin remained modestly silent at the Congress, his protégé, Mr. Masherov, made some particularly virulent remarks on the subject of intellectuals, and has been duly rewarded by promotion. What I find even more depressing is an attack by several important speakers on what they call the "apolitical" intellectuals. I presume this means that writers and scholars must now not only not criticise the Party, but actually go out of their way on every occasion to sing its praises?

I wonder if you have thought of the consequences of this particular retrogressive step. A number of speakers at the Congress voiced criticism of "voluntarism," "subjectivism," the failure to base decisions (in the past, of course) on practical realities and scientific fact. Although no one mentioned Mr. Khrushchev, I presume what all this means is that you now recognise the harm that was done by such wild schemes as the "virgin lands" campaign, or by such brilliant policies as ploughing in grass and planting peas while the cattle starved, or planting maize in areas where the climate made it impossible for it to grow. But, Mr. Prime Minister, all these were in fact Central Committee, *Party* decisions—even if they did emanate in the first instance from the First Secretary. It is not on record that you yourself voted against them. It was because they were Party decisions that no one dared to criticise them. Do you not think now that much capital could have been saved if knowledgeable people had been allowed to say what they thought of some of these mad schemes—and at the time, *before* the harm was done? What is going to happen about the next misconceived Party decision? One of Mr. Brezhnev's hobby horses, perhaps? If the Masherovs and Egorychevs have their way, as I presume they now will, paeans of enthusiastic praise will greet the next stupidity in much the same way as they greeted maize—until, of course, the next change of leaders takes place. Do you really think that this is the best way to achieve the most efficient use of resources, which I am sure is your aim? I wonder if Communists will ever realise that genuine, free discussion of Party policy is not just some kind of wickedness invented by capitalist cold warriors, but a sheer, practical necessity in a modern and efficient state?

WILL YOU forgive me if I extend this already very long letter by the addition of an anecdote (possibly apocryphal) of the Spanish Civil War?

It relates to a town which for a time came under the control of the Anarchists. Like all good anarchists, the new civil authorities disapproved of money, and money was therefore declared abolished in favour of barter. And for a time barter was the rule. Thus, a surgeon would remove a fellow citizen's appendix and receive from the municipal store a sack of rice in return. He would then part with smaller quantities of rice in payment to the shoemaker or the electrician. Naturally this caused a good deal of inconvenience and the central store system was therefore reorganised. In future, the surgeon, instead of a sack of rice, was issued with a certificate setting out the amount of service he had performed and the corresponding amounts that he could lawfully claim from the store—all expressed in equivalents of rice. This too proved inconvenient, and moreover the certificates became very tattered in the course of circulation and repeated use. And so the anarchists who controlled the municipal store hit on a remarkable new idea: they issued metal tokens of a special design which only they were allowed to employ. These metal tokens expressed value of labour and service always in terms of certain quantities of rice—from one pound to one hundredweight and so on. Henceforward the metal tokens circulated freely in exchange for goods and services and were redeemable at the store for various commodities. The anarchists, in despite of their doctrinal views, had re-invented Money.

I trust that you have now perceived that the purpose of this letter is to persuade you of the convenience that it will bring to the Soviet

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Union, and especially yourself, if, in spite of doctrine, you re-invent the Rule of Law and freedom of debate and discussion.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister, I know that your first temptation must be to dismiss all this as "Cold War." Now, we are both men of some age and experience, and I think we can put our cards on the table. Naturally, I am not going to pretend to you that I think of the present Soviet system of government as either particularly desirable or efficient. I think much of the dogma of Marx, Lenin, Mao, Stalin, and company is bilge—so probably do you. But that does not mean, whatever you may think, that I am an advocate of unbridled capitalism. I do assure you that for unimaginative, doltish selfishness there is sometimes very little to choose between our business men and your high party officials. Personally, I take a pragmatic and practical view of politics at home and am relatively indifferent to all our politicians, so long as they are kept in strict control by the law and the electorate. As for your country, I should prefer to see it well governed, but if you prefer to proceed by a series of power struggles from one police state to another, that is after all your business. And yet, can we really ignore each other quite like that? If you personally are overthrown next week or next month or next year by some fanatical Shelepin, or whatever he is then called, I cannot treat it as a matter of indifference. In my heart I feel that you are a pragmatist like myself—that you stand for the sensible and the practical solution, and devil take all dogma. I think your statesmanship at Tashkent showed that—I am not one of those who grudge you your success. I think it is better for my country, and for all of us, that the destinies of the Soviet Union should be guided by you rather than by many others that I can think of. It is therefore essentially in a spirit of self-interest that I am able to sign myself in all truthfulness,

Your sincere well-wisher,

Leonard Schapiro

A New Isolationism?

Letter from New York — By Irving Kristol

In a way, one sensed that something of the sort was happening, but one couldn't quite figure out what this "something" was. Now, however, out of the agonising tumult of the debate over Viet Nam, the outlines of the real problem are slowly but unmistakably taking shape. And a very real problem it is, proposing the possibility of nothing less than a revision and reconstruction of the principles which have guided American foreign policy over the past twenty-five years.

The issue of Viet Nam itself remains as controversial as ever, of course, with the situation in that country turbulent to the point of near-incomprehensibility, and with the future course of American policy there by no means certain. Everything hangs upon the answer to the question: are the people of South Viet Nam truly opposed to a Viet Cong take-over? Or, more precisely: are the people of South Viet Nam sufficiently opposed to the Viet Cong to collaborate in supporting a non-Communist régime that would, with massive American assistance (both military and economic), establish a viable non-Communist polity? This has always been the key question. Essentially, the critics and opponents of the Administration have been insisting that it was trying to foist anti-Communism (or non-Communism) upon a reluctant (or indifferent) people. No less essentially, the Administration's case has always rested upon the proposition that the people of South Viet Nam—within the limits of a political consciousness set by circumstances at once primitive and chaotic—really are, in their majority, hostile to the prospect of Communist rule and genuinely want American help.

Perhaps by the time this letter is being read, that question will have been answered, one way or the other. If not, such an answer will be certainly forthcoming in not too many months. And once the answer is given, Administration policy will indeed have been predetermined. If a stable non-Communist régime is established, the American commitment in South Viet Nam will have been affirmed beyond the reach of all criticism—and I, personally, would then expect more and more of the critics to say less and less about Viet Nam and to move on to more general issues. (Who now speaks of South Korea?) On the other hand, if such a régime cannot be established, the Administration will shift to a policy of disengagement and eventual withdrawal—and it might even shift radically to a

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policy of abandonment and abrupt withdrawal. It is significant that on 9 April, with the Ky government wobbling crazily, Senator Richard Russell (chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee and the most eloquent of "hawks") said flatly and publicly: "If it becomes clearly evident that a majority of the Vietnamese do not want our help, I would favour withdrawing immediately both military forces and economic aid." Other political leaders, including the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, Governor Romney, have said much the same thing. There is little doubt that American public opinion would be quick to ratify such an opinion.

What it comes down to is that, in the particular case of Viet Nam, Lyndon Johnson will shortly have a fairly complete freedom of action. The test results of American policy there will be in; they are likely to be quite unambiguous; and President Johnson, ever the sage physician of the body politic, will waste no time to prescribe the proper medicine—no matter how bitter this may be. I know that there are people, especially abroad, who believe that Lyndon Johnson is committed to the idea of an American imperial destiny, and that this commitment—deriving, presumably, from the economic or political compulsions of American society—is fixed beyond amendment. They could not be more wrong, both about Lyndon Johnson and about America.

As a matter of fact, it is precisely the question of America's "imperial destiny" that is now moving to the centre of attention and consciousness. However the Viet Nam problem is resolved, a truly great debate on foreign policy is commencing in the United States—one that the rest of the world ought to pay close attention to, since it will be of world-wide and historic significance. I say *close* attention advisedly, because (*a*) the issues at stake are not likely to be clearly defined at the outset; (*b*) the implications of these issues are all too likely to be deliberately obfuscated throughout; (*c*) the nations of the rest of the world are perhaps too inclined to enjoy a certain *Schadenfreude* over America's foreign policy dilemmas, and tend not to realise the extent to which their own destinies are being, if not decided, then at least provisionally shaped; and (*d*) the debate will have absolutely nothing, or at most precious little, to do with the conventional criticisms of American foreign policy, as expressed in or out of the United States.

This last point is worth a bit of emphasis, because it is inevitable that there will be a blurring of distinctions between the familiar categories and the new ones, with the new seeming to be but an extension of the old. To take one current example: the recent flurry of controversy over America's China policy might be interpreted by the British reader (as it is unquestionably interpreted by a fair number of the American participants, including the *New York Times*) as a struggle between the British "flexible" view of Communist China and the traditional American "inflexible" attitude of hostility towards the Maoist régime. But this is not what the controversy is about, and the surrounding rhetoric can be dangerously misleading.

What its critics are urging upon the Johnson Administration is, in effect, a "two-China" policy. No one is suggesting—not out loud, anyway—that we abandon Taiwan (or, if you prefer, Formosa) to the tender mercies of Mao. Such a suggestion would indeed be gratuitous at this moment, since Taiwan has one of the most prosperous economies, one of the most stable polities, and one of the least class-ridden societies in all of Asia. A successful agrarian reform has been carried out there; American economic aid has been rendered superfluous, and has just about ceased; and there is, by Asian standards, a fair measure of intellectual freedom. Taiwan seems here to stay—but so, of course, does Communist China. Why cannot the United States maintain its alliance with Taiwan while recognising Communist China's sovereignty over the mainland, admitting it to the United Nations, etc.?

The answer, of course, is that such a "two-China" policy happens to be utterly unacceptable to *both* Taiwan and Peking. As a matter of fact, both Dean Rusk and Arthur Goldberg have broadly hinted, in public utterance, that they think the "two-China" approach a perfectly reasonable one—if only the two Chinas would accept it. Our diplomatic relations with Taiwan inhibit them from being more candid on this point; and Peking's express and bitter scorn of this idea certainly does not encourage them to pursue it seriously. The plain truth is that there is no serious disagreement between the State Department and its critics over the specifics of China policy. No American government can recognise Communist China, or agree to its admission to the U.N., without a prior resolution of the Viet Nam war and a prior guarantee of the integrity of Taiwan. Given such a resolution and such a guarantee, normal diplomatic relations with Peking would follow as a matter of course. The present makers of American foreign policy are not "Dullesites"; there are no "old China hands" in the White House or State Department continuing a hopeless vendetta against the new régime; men like Dean Rusk, Arthur Goldberg, Walt Rostow,

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and George Ball do not have views on China that are noticeably different from those of their academic critics. What, then, is the fuss all about?

WELL, IT'S ABOUT something old and something new. The something old is what Denis Brogan once called "the illusion of American omnipotence." He was specifically referring to the right-wing notion that American *power* could promptly resolve all of our foreign policy dilemmas. But there is also an ancient liberal illusion that a "correct" American *policy* could easily achieve the same wonderful effect. Thus, we have the spectacle of American liberals demanding that the State Department put an end to China's "isolation"—at the very moment when China has most vigorously isolated itself from all its fellow Communist nations! Fidel Castro finds it impossible to have friendly relations with Communist China; how, in all reason, can one expect Lyndon Johnson to succeed where Castro fails? The British government has tried to establish normal relations with China, and to what effect? The assumption behind this kind of criticism—the assumption that China's attitudes and policies are merely a function of our own—is as frivolous as it is egomaniacal. It represents little more than a wilful refusal to look unpleasant facts in the face. The unpleasant facts, in this instance, have to do with Communist China's own conception of its role in world history—a conception that does not fit easily into either American or Russian or Indian perspectives on a viable world order.

But all this is as froth on the surface of politics. Deeper down, there is a new tide in American opinion, of which the ferment over China is but a superficial expression. In a recent article in *The New Yorker*, Richard Goodwin (a former assistant to both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson) has succinctly defined the real issue as follows: "[Would] the United States be seriously injured if much of Asia were to be dominated by a hostile power—at this moment in history by China?" After noting that American policy since 1941 has been based on a flatly positive answer to this question; that the United States moved into war with Japan precisely over the "territorial integrity" of Viet Nam (then French Indo-China); and that every American President since Franklin Roosevelt has had occasion to send American soldiers to Asia, Mr. Goodwin then repeats his query: "Although the American stake is not a new one, is it real?" That he himself thinks it to be so is less significant than the caution with which he expresses this view, and the fact that he felt it necessary to raise the question in the first place.

The direction, the power, the ultimate import of such "second thoughts" about American foreign policy are still unclear; it may be a temporary drift or it might portend a secular change; its outlines are blurred; its movements have a shy and random quality. I would call it the "new isolationism," while warning against too strict an interpretation of that term. Its chief spokesmen are Senator Fulbright, George F. Kennan, and—most especially—Walter Lippmann. Only Mr. Kennan has said openly and with characteristic forthrightness, at a recent Congressional hearing, that his views add up to a kind of isolationism. Senator Fulbright and Mr. Lippmann would, I think, reject and abhor the label. "Isolationism" still has a bad name. But this was not always so; and it may not always be so.

I HAVE ALWAYS believed that the standard historical accounts of the so-called "isolationist-interventionist" controversy of 1936–1941 are wildly oversimplified. Then, as now, there were two kinds of isolationism. Just as there is now a tiny minority indifferent to, or even sympathetic with, the Communist movement, so there were those isolationists who were, in effect, *anti*-anti-fascist. But there was another kind of isolationism (represented then, as now, by the socialist, Norman Thomas) that formed a disinterested, even idealistic, opposition to Great Power Politics; and many of these isolationist arguments are now experiencing a quite unexpected resurrection.

I was myself a young isolationist at the time, and can still recall the force of such arguments. Could the United States hope to police the world? Would we not make a finer contribution by perfecting our own society and allowing our example to inspire other nations? Would not the assumption of imperial responsibilities abroad undermine democracy at home? Would we not be dragged into an endless series of sordid military adventures? Might we not have to establish a "garrison state" in order to live up to our many foreign commitments? Such questions were not trivial then, as they are not now.

In the end, however, the isolationist argument collapsed before the world-wide threat of fascism. The average American gradually, reluctantly, came to the conclusion that the United States, as a major power, simply had to take a major responsibility for the maintenance of world peace and world order. Though there was little doubt that the American republic could have survived—maybe even prospered—in splendid isolation, this possibility came to seem ever more tawdry, lacking in dignity and self-respect, and revealing a callous indifference to the opinions and fortunes of mankind. With every fascist

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victory, isolation presented itself as an ever more squalid little philosophy. On the day I entered the army, I surrendered my isolationism with my civilian clothes, and actually experienced a sense of liberation. The choice had finally been made, and I had no doubt it was the only possible—and therefore the right—one. Most Americans, I suppose, came to the same conclusion in pretty much the same way.

The "interventionist" victory laid the basis for American foreign policy in the subsequent twenty-five years. The United Nations, the Marshall Plan, the Truman doctrine, foreign aid, NATO, Korea, Viet Nam—these were all elements in a grand design for a world where each nation would be persuaded, shamed, coerced, and bribed to observe the civilities essential to a decent international community. It was a parochial vision, of course; and a non-historical one. There was more than a little hypocrisy involved, as the United States found itself of necessity engaging in traditional imperialist manoeuvres while rejecting the imperialist ethos and proclaiming the inviolable rights of nations. But there was a genuine and splendid vision involved, too. When Vice-President Humphrey, in a recent (and little-noted) interview, reaffirmed our commitment to Asia ("we are going to be in Asia for a long, long time") and defined this commitment as a constant intention to "defeat aggression, to defeat social misery, to build viable, free institutions and to achieve peace," he was speaking from the American heart. *This* kind of welfare-state imperialism (if that term is appropriate) is very much in the American grain. True, a great many Americans, both on the right and left, have found the whole business irksome, and have stirred up controversy over the management of particular issues, when they could. Still, the fundamentals of this policy were never really questioned. Until Viet Nam....

THIS, I THINK, is the true importance of the Viet Nam war, and the debate over it, and over our China policy, that has emerged in the past couple of months. What has come into question is, not our Asian policy, or our Communist policy, but *the totality of our foreign policy*. Our commitment to South Viet Nam is supported by public opinion—but uneasily, apprehensively, with dark forebodings. In Korea, we at least had United Nations support; we were, in theory, fighting in defence of the U.N., and that made sense, even as it roused little enthusiasm. But what is the sense of our going it alone in Viet Nam? Win or lose, are we not in the future going to be facing exactly the same kinds of situations elsewhere in Asia, and in Africa and South America too? Are we really going to fight, on our own, an endless series of "dirty little wars"? Is this a reasonable or tolerable prospect? Questions such as these are made all the more pointed by the fact that, simultaneous with the Viet Nam crisis, NATO appears to be falling apart, the French government is behaving in anything but a friendly manner, our foreign aid programmes seem to create only resentment abroad without having a perceptible economic effect, the United Nations is coming more and more to be dominated by irrational and irascible small nations whose very names sound meaningless, while the Communist world is itself losing its monolithic character and ceasing to be *per se* a threat to international peace. Under these circumstances, is it not time to stop where we are and pause to reflect?

Democracy and empire never do go well together; and what the American democracy sees looming before it is, not some kind of magnanimous welfare-state imperialism, but the naked responsibilities of world power, the assumption of which has too close a resemblance to imperialism of an older and more classic variety. It does not like what it sees. Empires are best run by ruling classes, its wars are best fought by professional soldiers, its favourite ideologies are intrinsically anti-egalitarian. The United States has no ruling class in whose imagination visions of empire can constitute a national purpose. It has not nearly enough professional soldiers for imperial purposes—and never will have, given the pleasures of prosperity at home. Its commitment to egalitarianism has, if anything, been reinforced over the past decade —witness, *e.g.*, the government's actions in the field of civil rights. And now that the economists and the politicians have finally figured out a way to sustain full employment and economic growth, the possibilities of "the Great Society" are infinitely more interesting than anything that foreign policy can propose.

Given all this, it is not at all certain that the American democracy could become an empire even if its governors wanted to. And there is not much evidence that they do want to. But if not empire, what? In this age of nuclear weapons and intercontinental missiles, the older idea of a *Festung Amerika* is close to preposterous. What can a new isolationism prescribe? A major and direct threat to America's national existence—by a nuclear-armed China, say, or a newly-belligerent Russia—would render such a question academic. But one suspects that history will not be so obliging, and that questions of this order will continue to be anything but academic. Indeed, it is more than likely that they will be at the centre of American politics for a long time to come.

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WRITING recently in *Newsweek*, Walter Lippmann put the matter with his usual acumen:

> Not since the great controversy over isolation which took place between the two world wars has the country been so sharply divided as it is today. In the field of foreign policy there is today no consensus. This is a sign that once again there is in the making a deep change in the nation's conceptions of its role in the world. . . .
>
> Our controversy today is not about whether we should retreat to the isolation from which we emerged in the '30s. It is over whether we should work our way back from the unplanned, emergency commitments of the post-war era. Those among us who want to hold on to all the positions we occupied at that time are at odds with those of us who believe that the abnormal extension of our commitments cannot and should not be made permanent.

It all depends, to be sure, on what one regards as "abnormal," and how realistic it is to contemplate our "working our way back" through twenty-five momentous years. I myself do not think we can go back very far. One has merely to raise the problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons among the new, unstable nations of the world to see that American commitments have no longer much to do with mere geography, and that the idea of "the national interest" cannot be circumscribed in any easily definable way. On the other hand, I must admit that when I try to imagine the road ahead, I don't see it very clearly either. Much will depend on what other nations do—unfriendly nations such as China of course, but also such friendly nations as Britain, France, and Germany. This is as much their problem as it is an American one. They seem unaware of it, but the totality of their foreign policies is at stake too. And it is more probable than not that it will be up to them to decide upon the future of the "new isolationism" in America.

If they can take seriously the task of creating an "international order" that is more than a convenient cover for national self-centredness, this great debate can be transcended. Within such an order, the American democracy can function as a responsible world power. Without such an order, the burden of Great Power politics might well become heavier than the American democracy will be willing to sustain. For a long time now, the nations of the free world have had their basic foreign policies made in America. At this moment, the roles seem on their way to being reversed—but the nations of the free world appear to be remarkably unaware (or is it wilfully ignorant?) of what is happening.

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Rosa Luxemburg

By George Lichtheim

IN THE MYTHOLOGY of revolutionary socialism, east and west of the great divide, the name of Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) is indissolubly linked with that of Karl Liebknecht: victims of the Spartacist rising in January 1919 whose brutal suppression by soldiers nominally responsible to a Social Democratic government sealed in blood the war-time split of the German labour movement. Nor is this familiar assessment confined to Communist literature. In Western historiography too, their names invariably appear as though joined together by history's decree. Every study of the Weimar Republic opens perforce with an account of the Berlin insurrection launched by the nascent Communist movement against the government of Ebert and Noske. And while the ceremonial linking of the names Liebknecht and Luxemburg by today's East German régime has long ceased to be anything but a gesture towards a dimly remembered past, the legend persists that German Communism conserves the heritage of this strange pair of martyrs: the solid lawyer and *Reichstag* deputy, suddenly catapulted into fame by his passionate war-time oratory in 1914–18, and the brilliant Polish-Jewish woman revolutionary who appears in these accounts as his inspirer and companion. The fact that down to 1914 they had virtually nothing in common, that Liebknecht—by philosophical conviction a Kantian—was not even a Marxist, let alone a Communist, and that in 1919 he was merely the popular figurehead of a rebellion not effectively controlled by anyone, is seldom permitted to encroach upon the myth.

It is the great merit of Mr. Nettl's enormously detailed and painstakingly scholarly work[1] that a serious study of Rosa Luxemburg's actual historical role is now at last available to the public. A biographer by choice and inclination, he is also in effect a historian of the East European Socialist movement before 1914; and while his partisanship is never concealed, he has not on the whole allowed it to interfere with the analysis of personalities and events. The comparison with Mr. Isaac Deutscher's biography of Trotsky imposes itself. It works in Mr. Nettl's favour, if only because his intellectual apparatus includes economics and sociology, as well as the standard techniques of the historian. His grasp of Russian and Polish realities is the equal of Mr. Deutscher's, while in relation to Germany his understanding, though not quite flawless, is vastly superior to that of most writers whose primary background is East European. These are impressive qualifications, and they have resulted in the production of a remarkable work. Readers not put off by its formidable bulk (827 pages of text, plus two lengthy appendices, and 70 pages of bibliography in five languages, including Russian and Polish) can now at last find their way through the maze of political and theoretical conflicts from which in due course the Russian, Polish, Austrian, and German upheavals of 1918–19 were to derive their shape.

WHAT EMERGES FROM Mr. Nettl's analysis of the crucial role played by his heroine in these events is at first glance surprising. Those who had thought of Rosa Luxemburg as primarily a figure in German Socialist history will have to revise what they had gathered from earlier biographers. The familiar and slightly puzzling image—a young woman from Russian Poland who suddenly erupted on the German scene around 1900 and thereafter made a career as a brilliant publicist—is replaced by a far more complex and fascinating picture: that of a woman who was both a gifted theorist and a steel-willed conspirator, the central figure of a small but influential group of Polish revolutionaries who operated simultaneously in the Socialist movements of three countries—Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany; an organiser who covered her traces with such skill that even her closest German friends and associates had

[1] *Rosa Luxemburg*. By J. P. NETTL. Two vols. Oxford University Press, 6 gns.

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no real inkling of her true role in neighbouring Poland and in the leadership of the conspiratorial Marxist group she had founded with her close personal and political associate Leo Jogiches. Though formally a German citizen (by way of a nominal marriage) since 1898, a prominent member of the German Social Democratic Party, and a steady contributor to its journals, Rosa Luxemburg—almost down to the eve of war in 1914 when she partly relinquished her Polish ties—remained at heart what she had been since her student days in Zürich in the 1890s: the theorist of a self-appointed "peer group" of revolutionaries with a following among the Polish-speaking masses of the three Eastern Empires, whose simultaneous collapse in 1918 was to restore Poland as a nation: thereby paradoxically inflicting upon Rosa Luxemburg and her group (the SDKPiL—Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) the most shattering political defeat of her life.

THE SECRET of Rosa Luxemburg's strange personality and career, one may now say with certainty, is to be found in the fact that for twenty years she was the principal link between the German Socialist movement and the totally different world of the conspiratorial and élitist Russo-Polish underground parties and sects. Manipulating her contacts on both sides with remarkable dexterity, she managed to appear in German eyes as an expert on the Russian situation, while representing the German Social Democratic Party (the *SPD*) towards the Polish and Russian factions: including Lenin's Bolsheviks, with whom she alternately feuded and cooperated. So great was her operational skill (at least while she had the benefit of Leo Jogiches' advice) that she succeeded in getting her small Marxist group, whose following was limited to a few cities, accepted by the Germans as the official representation of the Polish workers in Germany, as against the more numerous Polish Socialist party of her rivals, the *PPS*. This strange configuration in turn she exploited with relentless energy to impose herself on the cautious leadership of German Social Democracy: to the veteran August Bebel and most of the other leaders she was primarily an ally against Polish nationalism: a growing force among the Polish masses in Silesia of which they stood in mortal terror (as did the Imperial German Government). As long as she was ready to battle the nationalists on their home ground, the *SPD* Executive forgave her almost anything: even her doctrinaire Marxism and her constant broadsides against their own somnolent passivity. It was for this that Bebel protected her against the South German "revisionists" and against her sworn enemies, the trade union leaders; for this that Kautsky (who liked her personally) opened the pages of his great theoretical organ, the *Neue Zeit*, to her and allowed her to lambaste his old opponent Eduard Bernstein to her heart's content. To the more cynical *SPD* bureaucrats, indeed, she was hardly more than an unconscious agent of Germanisation among the Polish masses in Eastern Germany. The alliance collapsed only when in 1910 she tired of it and turned against Bebel and even against her old friend and protector Kautsky. Only then did she become the leader of the extreme Left in Germany. The whole of this deeply hidden labyrinth of Central and East European politics in the years before the first World War has been illuminated for the first time by Mr. Nettl's truly Herculean labours in the German and Polish archives.

That a degree of secretiveness, and even duplicity, should in consequence have been imposed upon a woman by nature candid, outspoken, and contemptuous of make-believe, must be laid to the peculiar world of Russo-Polish *émigré* politics from which in 1896 she suddenly emerged, to astound the Congress of the Socialist International with the spectacle of a fiery young woman of twenty-five informing the bearded veterans of a hundred battles that they knew nothing about the East European picture, and that moreover Marx and Engels had been wrong about it. To this point it will be necessary to return. What needs to be retained here is a biographical circumstance to which Mr. Nettl has lent some reluctant prominence: the fact that her deepest loyalties lay in an area which had little to do with her public life as a representative of German Socialism. As her biographer puts it,

> Many of her German friends were totally unaware of the fact that on top of her full-time work in the *SPD*—and on the problem of Polish organisation on German soil, in Pomerania and Silesia—she was simultaneously one of the main inspirers and leaders of a Polish party whose centre of gravity lay in the Russian empire.

Not only were her relations with Jogiches, Marchlewski, and others of her circle more important to her than her German friends: she actually disliked Germany and the Germans, though she lived there for twenty years and played a prominent role in the *SPD*. A self-conscious Easterner, she preferred Russian literature to German (admittedly a judgment shared by many discerning critics), described Russian as "the language of the future," and for the rest reserved her personal affection for the French, the Italians, and other Latins. It is a remarkable story, conceivable perhaps only in

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an age more liberal than ours, when disregard for national frontiers was thought respectable at least by Socialists. But in large measure it responded also to certain features of her background duly recorded by Mr Nettl: her early involvement in the conspiratorial world of Polish *émigré* politics in Zürich and Paris, and her naïve assumption that the moral and intellectual standards of the Jewish intelligentsia in Eastern Europe were natural also to the labour movement, or at least could be implanted in it under the guise of "proletarian internationalism."

THIS IS THE KEY to the story. Mr. Nettl handles it gingerly, though from time to time he summons up courage to remind the reader that the intellectual leadership of Rosa Luxemburg's and Leo Jogiches' private creation, the SDKPiL, was largely (though not wholly) a Jewish affair. Today when this particular story has been played out to its dreadful finale, there is a natural reluctance to dwell upon these circumstances. Mr. Nettl wisely resists the temptation, though he is clearly unhappy with the notion that the emotional spring which fed Rosa Luxemburg's passionate loyalty to the International was a form of Jewish Messianism. He does not wholly repudiate the idea, but leaves it in the air. Her contemporaries were less inhibited. To the majority faction of Polish Socialism, the *PPS*, she was quite simply a Jewish intellectual who cared nothing for Poland; to the self-consciously Jewish leaders of the *Bund*, the mass movement of the Yiddish-speaking proletariat in Russian Poland, she was a traitor to her people. In her own eyes she was a true internationalist and the only consistent Marxist of the lot: this although her attitude on the Polish question was in flat contradiction to literally everything Marx (and even Engels) had said on the subject.

IT IS NECESSARY to pause here. The subject is loaded with passion. It was the central issue of Rosa Luxemburg's political life—far more important to her than the boring quarrels within the German Socialist movement, or even the more fascinating disputations between Lenin and his Menshevik opponents (which she exploited with remarkable skill to promote her own group to a key position inside the *Russian* party). It was the one issue on which she stood ready to break with her closest associates and to fly in the face of every authority, including that of Marx. Poland was dead! It could never be revived! Talk of a Polish nation, of an independent Poland, was not only political and economic lunacy; it was a distraction from the class struggle, a betrayal of Socialism! If Marx had

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held a different view, then Marx had been mistaken. If the International solemnly went on record affirming the traditional Social Democratic creed (Poland must be restored as a bastion against Tsarist Russia), then the International was misguided and must be told so, or its resolutions must be tortured to yield a different sense. Above all, the Polish Socialist majority party, the *PPS*, must be pursued, up hill and down dale, and denounced as a nationalist organisation falsely parading in Socialist clothing. If the very SDKPiL, her own brainchild, threatened to split and founder on this rock, so much the worse for it. One thing only counted: fidelity to proletarian internationalism as she understood it (and as Marx, poor man, had plainly not understood it). On this point, and on this alone, she was intractable. Even Jogiches at times thought she went too far, though he had originally helped her to evolve this attitude while they were both students in Zürich in the 1890s. Her other Polish associates put up with her fanaticism on the subject, though they did not share it. In the end, the allegedly impossible happened: Poland was restored in 1918, and her veteran friend and colleague Adolf Warszawski, with her reluctant consent, fused the remnant of their following with the left wing of the *PPS* to form the Polish Communist Party (the right wing under Pilsudski having split off). By then twenty years had been spent, or rather wasted, on one of the strangest aberrations ever to possess a major political intellect.

FOR THE REMARKABLE THING is that on the national question, and specifically on the issue of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg stood entirely alone. Not a single Marxist of her generation, outside her own immediate circle, agreed with her: not even Trotsky, in many respects her equal among the Russians (though they never took to each other); certainly not Lenin, who treated her views on the subject with the good-natured disdain he reserved for the handful of opponents for whom he had a personal liking. Elsewhere the damage was considerable. As time went on, her insanity—there is no other word for it—on the topic of nationalism developed into the gravest of her political handicaps. Her doctrinaire refusal to admit the legitimacy of *any* national movement in Europe was repudiated by Kautsky, by Plekhanov, by the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, and virtually every other Socialist group or personality. It angered the veteran leader of Austrian Social Democracy, Victor Adler, who on this issue became and remained her personal enemy. It embarrassed her old friend and protector Kautsky. It undermined the position of her followers in Poland and her friends among the Russians. It maddened the Polish majority Socialists and drove their less reputable elements into paroxysms of anti-Semitic fury. It very nearly wrecked her own creation, the SDKPiL. It has remained to this day the greatest single obstacle to the revival of a "Luxemburgist" tradition of democratic Socialism in post-Stalinist Poland. And it was totally unnecessary. There never was the smallest justification for it, notwithstanding the pseudo-Marxist sophistries of her Zürich doctoral dissertation of 1898 on the industrial development of Poland: sophistries which her biographer treats with the gravity of a theologian expounding a particularly incomprehensible piece of ecclesiastical doctrine. It was, from start to finish, a display of sheer intellectual perversity, backed up and sustained by the strongest of her emotional commitments: the Messianic vision of a Proletarian Revolution which would institute a new world order. She went so far as to assert that while national self-determination was a farce under capitalism, it would be unnecessary under socialism. Why bother about it if the revolution was going to make all things new?

HER BIOGRAPHER, in general a wholehearted sympathiser with her person and her views, draws the line at this point, though unwillingly. On most other issues he tends to support her, and to find fault with her opponents, whenever possible, but her calamitous misjudgment of the national problem is too much even for him. He does indeed set out all possible mitigating circumstances at great length but the effect is not the intended one; for the more earnestly, in his chosen role as counsel for the defence, he addresses the jury on behalf of his client, the clearer it becomes that the case is really hopeless. A more complete misjudgment of a political issue than Rosa Luxemburg's position on the national question was never seen or heard on land or sea. Yet strangely enough, it is this heroic persistence along the wrong track that lends pathos and distinction to her conception of Socialism. For her, as for many other East European revolutionaries who had renounced all ties of class and nationality, the only loyalty was to the proletariat, the only true fatherland the International. When in August 1914 the sword broke in her hand, she seriously contemplated suicide.

It is this wholly abstract, totally unrealistic, yet unshakeable commitment to a vision transcending the circumstances of daily existence that sets Rosa Luxemburg apart and lends her the dignity of a tragic figure. As a theorist—*pace* her biographer—she does not take first rank. Her intervention in the German revisionist

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controversy around 1900 was limited to the political side, if only because she had no understanding of philosophy (a handicap shared by her biographer, to judge from his extremely odd notions about Kant). As an economist she was brilliant and suggestive rather than profound. *The Accumulation of Capital*, her major work, though a truly remarkable *tour de force* and shot through with extraordinary flashes of prophetic insight into the nature of imperialism, suffers from a fatal flaw: its central theoretical argument is based on a misreading of both Marx and mathematics. (As in the case of Poland she had tried to correct the Master, and predictably come a cropper: the usual fate of Marx's critics, even among Marxists.) Her other theoretical excursions remained fragmentary. She may have anticipated some of Trotsky's notions about the "permanent revolution," though her biographer denies it, but it was Parvus and Radek (both from Eastern Europe) who first developed what was later to become the specifically "Trotskyist" view of the world situation and the function of the coming Russian upheaval within it.

In the factional struggles among the Russian Marxists she wavered uncertainly between the Bolsheviks and their opponents and in the end reluctantly underwrote the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, with qualifications which Lenin's followers have been busy repudiating ever since. She disliked Lenin's organisational concept, but had nothing to put in its place, except a vague faith in "the masses." In general, organisational questions bored her and she never bothered to equip either her Polish party or the German *Spartakus* League with the kind of effective leadership that might have placed either of them at the head of a mass movement. As a party leader she was effective only when steered by Leo Jogiches (who for years did the organisational work, while she wrote brilliant tracts demolishing their opponents) and promptly lost her bearings when their long-standing personal relationship broke up under the strain of the 1905 revolution and she had to navigate by herself. Her final throw, the Berlin rising of January 1919, led directly to her death, and thereby decapitated the nascent German Communist movement. Nor was this catastrophe accidental, for although the rising was forced on her (against her better judgment and that of her experienced Polish associates) by the unwisdom of Liebknecht and the *furor teutonicus* which had seized hold of the German Communists, her decision to participate in what she regarded as an act of madness was in tune with her mystical doctrine of loyalty to the proletariat. For the rest it was an almost literal application of the revolutionary lessons she had

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been preaching to the Germans since her own participation in the great Russo-Polish upheaval of 1905–6. The only revolution she had ever wanted or believed in was a spontaneous uprising of the proletariat in the great cities of Central and Eastern Europe. When it came, she was ready for it, though she must have known that defeat was certain.

WHAT THEN remains of Rosa Luxemburg? Strange to say, that which she least expected: a myth—that of the woman who embodied all the faith and hope of the old pre-1914 revolutionary Socialism, and who paid for it with her life. And something else: a kind of moral heroism. No one who reads her works or studies her career can fail to see that Rosa Luxemburg was above all a moralist. Though tone-deaf in philosophy (she seems never to have understood what the argument about Kantian ethics was about) she was totally serious, and totally committed, where political morality was concerned. For her, every political question had to be argued in ethical terms, though she would have been surprised to hear it said: was not Socialist humanism the most *obvious* thing in the world? Her moral rigorism on matters such as war, colonial exploitation, or the denial of freedom to opponents, lifted her beyond the confines of reformist opportunism and Bolshevist cynicism alike, into a region where she outdistanced her contemporaries. On moral issues her judgment was infallible. Just as in 1914 she saw at once that the International was dead and Social Democracy, as she put it, "a stinking corpse," so in 1918 she coupled her reluctant acceptance of the October Revolution with an incisive critique of the Bolshevik dictatorship and the beginning of terrorism. Her posthumously published reflections on the Russian Revolution were brushed aside by Lenin. Even the exiled Trotsky refused to accept them. They have nonetheless become the testament of the old humanist Socialism which was shipwrecked in the first World War. In political terms her message was utopian, for a revolution which respects the liberty of *all* is the hardest thing in the world to achieve and perhaps impossible, unless backed from the start by the vast majority of the people. But then a truly democratic revolution was the only kind she had ever wanted. Minority dictatorship and terrorism did not appeal to her. What she stood for was lost in the bloodbath of 1914–18, which in turn prepared the ground for the ultimate horrors of Stalinism and Fascism: both equally repugnant to the spirit of the woman over whose tormented body victors and vanquished in the first round of Europe's civil war marched into their inheritance.

Harvard Cheer

Harvard Advocate Centennial Anthology. Edited by JONATHAN D. CULLER. Schenkman Publishing Co., $7.95.

THE HARVARD ADVOCATE, it seems, has been running for a hundred years, with a short break during the last war; and the publication of this anthology affords us, as they used to say, an opportunity to felicitate a distinguished and senior contemporary. It must be admitted that in the ordinary way the prospect of reading a quarter of a million words extracted from the files of an undergraduate magazine would be oppressive, possibly repulsive, but just as Harvard is quite another thing from most colleges, this is quite another thing from a college literary magazine, and this collection is always interesting and sometimes much more.

Mr. Culler's brief historical sketch explains that the paper started in 1866, after the suppression by the college authorities of a predecessor which had protested too much, for example against compulsory chapel. Its object was to advocate the abolition of this, and of other illiberal customs; but although its motto was *dulce est periculum* it avoided trouble in these early days, the President merely observing that a poem entitled "You Kissed me in my Dreams" was, though really excellent, a shade too amorous. Coming events, perhaps, were casting their shadows before; but the *Advocate* was for twenty years primarily a newspaper, and became a literary journal only when the *Crimson* took over the news in the 'eighties. After that its Presidents and literary editors included, among other famous names, Kittredge, Wallace Stevens, Arthur Ficke, Conrad Aiken, John H. Finley, James Agee, and, more recently, Robert Bly and Donald Hall.

The superiority of the *Advocate* over its peers is doubtless a function of the superiority of Harvard itself, and one shirks an explanation of that. For some reason it does not feel absurd that people treat the Harvard end of Cambridge, Massachusetts as the centre of the world, using private mappemondes with the Square in the middle, metropolis in a Boston suburb; in this way perfectly ordinary streets and cafeterias acquire some of the numen more plausibly associated with the Yard, the bookshops, the clever dons, the Widener, the Charles. Many of these objects and places may seem unremarkable to an unenchanted eye, and, like the high standards of entry to this "socio-economic *élite*," insufficient to explain the prestige of the University, let alone of the *Advocate*. But there it is. Of course there is a strong tradition of "creative writing" and a much larger graduate

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school than at any English university, so that the town is full of writers, suffering more or less elegantly, cooking carefully to the stereophonic music which wells out of the walls, dreading the day when they must leave Cambridge. And, more vaguely, there is the sense, which doubtless owes something to the activities of the Roosevelts and Kennedy, of being directly involved with the nation and the culture, rather than merely preparing for that involvement. To be elected President or "Pegasus" (literary editor) of the *Advocate* is to have more than the promise of national celebrity; and the paper itself has national status. It is almost too conscious of this, and enforces maturity on its contributors.

THE ANTHOLOGY contains pieces by very famous men and others, often much better, by dreadfully mature boys and girls. It mirrors large changes. President Eliot is reported as saying, in 1869, that the College owed an education only to an *élite* characterised by perseverance, so that a poor boy who made it was only proving what he would have had to prove anyway; but the *Advocate* was a smart club and cost more than the most persevering poor boy could well accumulate at twenty, so the early pages of the *Advocate* were not exactly open to all the talents. There is, however, some strong reviewing, as when the youth of America is counselled, in 1876, to shun the poetry of Whitman as a "polluted bucket which a maniac has filled, and which English sensualism raises to our lips." The crafty English, sustaining themselves on the pure water of Browning, used Whitman as a means to achieve what they ceaselessly sought, the corruption of American innocence. Other material of the early years includes Theodore Roosevelt on football, urging the men on the team to work faithfully. The editor includes a later piece of Theodore's, written in 1915, thirty-six years on, saying that pacifists are sissies, like the opponents of football; though in between he had been a notable opponent himself. Franklin Delano was in the *Advocate* at nineteen, with a very undergraduate parody, and in 1900 Wallace Stevens was writing editorials about the construction of a fence round the Yard and the reconstruction of the Harvard cheer.

Among the poets whose juvenilia is trapped in the *Advocate* files are E. A. Robinson, Stevens, Eliot, Aiken and Cummings. Of these Stevens is, on his *Advocate* showing, so much the least distinguished that nobody could have dreamed of his ever turning into a major poet; though the editor acutely points out that he refers to pigeons and to chaos, both of which recur in the later poetry. Because the *Advocate*

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is what it is, Stevens wrote again for it later, and so we pass from a worthless "Song" of 1900 straight over forty years to "Mrs. Alfred Uraguay" and "Asides on the Oboe." The Eliot poems are much better, and you can see that he was reading Symons and Laforgue with pen in hand, and trying out the tunes of "Conversation Galante" and *Prufrock*, whose tie and tonsure, it appears, were borrowed from Life itself:

> *And Life, a little bald and grey,*
> *Waits, hat and gloves in hand,*
> *Languid, fastidious and bland,*
> *Punctilious to tie and suit*
> *(Somewhat impatient of delay)*
> *On the doorstep of the Absolute.*

"Spleen," from which this comes, deserves to be in the *Collected Poems*, and so does the even earlier "Nocturne," which begins:

> *Romeo,* grand sérieux, *to importune,*
> *Guitar and hat in hand, beside the gate*
> *With Juliet, in the usual debate*
> *Of love, beneath a bored but courteous moon....*

Aiken's poems are fluent and assured; Cummings, though he has an ambitious piece on modernism in all the arts (Scriabin is "the greatest theorist of modern music"), is, as you might expect, not quite himself.

There are many other poets—Fitts, Fitzgerald, Viereck, Harry Brown, Wilbur, Adrienne Rich, Nemerov, Lowell, Hollander; and, among the prosemen, Agee, Mailer, Cozzens, Hawkes, Burroughs. But although I have put Lowell and Burroughs in this list, neither got into the *Advocate* as a student so that their contributions, like those of Djuna Barnes, Marianne Moore, Pasternak, Pound and Henry Miller (who was responsible for the banning of one issue) testify merely to the pretentions of the paper to being something more than a student magazine. The question arises whether this is wholly good for the young writers; only the greatest talent, perhaps, can survive the challenge to such early maturation. The benefits are more obvious: if your student paper contains work by Pound or Pasternak you try harder. Mr. Culler thinks there is no more to be said, rejoicing that contributions are nowadays superior in technique to those of Stevens and Eliot because there is among the students a "new professionalism." Far from being the paper it was in the beginning, the *Advocate* now deals only with such professionals, with "real" writers. "It must continue to be a national magazine," he says.

Now there is no denying that recent Harvard writing goes some way to confirm his view. Whereas a story like Agee's "A Walk Before Mass" had evident promise, it also bore the marks of a slightly ridiculous immaturity. Twelve years later, in 1941, Howard Nemerov provided a story which looks like the work of a grown virtuoso; and we pass on to a much more recent work by Nathaniel La Mar, which would not look out of place in the highest company. That there is nothing freakish about this we may tell from examining work of comparable quality by Jonathan Kozol, Gerald Hillman, and Donald Bloch. This development shows only less in the poetry; there is a long poem by Robert Dawson, written at twenty, which achieves an eerie level of sophistication. We shall just have to see whether they will go on to bless the *Advocate* or wish that, like Robert Lowell, they had been coldly rejected by it.

The editor makes a special point of one story, Sally Bingham's "Winter Term," of 1956. This became the model for many others, and the genre is called "the Harvard Square Sex Story." The characteristics are that it is about a man and a girl from Harvard and Radcliffe, who find that sex makes them unhappy. Though local in detail the theme has, of course, a national, not to say international, resonance. The mass of such stories suggested to one shrewd editor that "something is very much amiss in the lives of students at Harvard and Radcliffe (or anywhere, for that matter)" and he suggests that sex becomes difficult when everybody is for it but the authorities pretend not to be. It strikes me as heartening that these mature but woeful students have not lost the old habit of blaming the administration for everything, even their failures in bed, or under bushes on the Common, or in the back seats of cars.

President Eliot, in the address I quoted before, was clearly determined to prevent such problems by not having women around. "The difficulties involved in a common residence of hundreds of young men and women of immature character and marriageable age," he observed, "are very grave. The necessary police regulations are exceedingly burdensome." He prudently postponed the problem for as many generations as possible—"the world knows next to nothing about the natural mental capacities of the female sex"—but it had to come up sometime, and the *Advocate* sensitively documented it. It seems that the biological situation defined by the President remains too much for the campus police, though it is doubtful whether the drying up of the supply of stories in the Sally Bingham manner means that the students have solved it on their own. The only comfort, so far as I can see, is that to write as well as some of these young men and women you have to give a lot of attention to other matters, and so keep out of harm's way and the police's.

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But if maturity keeps coming along earlier and earlier there will be mature authors and married folk in the *élite* high schools; the Wallace Stevens of the next *Advocate* centennial volume will have written his "Asides on the Oboe" before he goes up, and the substance of the paper will not be juvenilia nor even mature professionalism, but simply dotage.

Frank Kermode

Evil is Commonplace

The Comedians. By GRAHAM GREENE. *Bodley Head*, 25s.

GRAHAM GREENE wrote of *A Burnt-Out Case* that it was "an attempt to give dramatic expression to various types of belief, half-belief and non-belief in the kind of setting, removed from world-politics and household preoccupations, where such differences are felt acutely and find expression. This Congo is a region of the mind...." The preface to *The Comedians* insists, by contrast, on immediate reality, politically and in daily life. Conditions in Haiti, "an evil slum floating a few miles from Florida" are neither "invented" nor "blackened." This book too is concerned with degrees of belief; but its major achievement is the imaginative reality of the rule of terror in Haiti. The evil ruler, "Papa Doc" Duvalier, the bogeymen secret police, the Tontons Macoute, the chicanery, the destruction of normal living—made vivid through the inconsequential light and telephone rationing—are drawn with authority, concrete, random, final. Graham Greene is well aware that the juxtaposition of normal human preoccupations—food, sex, light, money—with a pervasive imminent *possibility* of aimless destruction is much more terrifying than any intricate description of torture. "Violence," he said, in an essay on James, "must not lend the tone (that is melodrama): it must draw its tone from all the rest of life." It is the accepted, casually factual descriptions that make the power of the book. The Tontons Macoute, behind their dark glasses, are not devilish intelligences. They are stupid, uncertainly human, and brutal. The details are not insisted on, but cumulatively damning; Duvalierville, the dusty show-piece city, unfinished except for the cockpit; the schoolchildren given a compulsory holiday to see the firing squad perform in the cemetery, the petulant, meaningless, potentially explosive breaking-up of the funeral of the dead Minister. They are horrible because men are trying to live through them, as men lived through the blitz.

It is because this evil is concrete that it can be extended into a successful symbol for the insistent element of random violence in contemporary life. "Violent deaths are natural deaths here. He died of his environment," Dr. Magiot remarks of the dead Minister; the Minister's son, changed by the environment from decadent poet to inefficient guerrilla, says Papa Doc is "real. Horror is always real." Brown, the narrator, brooding on his mistress' father, hanged at Nüremberg, equates Baron Samedi, the Haitian cemetery bogey, Papa Doc and the other "devilish Führer." "Haiti was not an exception in a sane world: it was a small slice of everyday life taken at random. Baron Samedi walked in all our graveyards."

The characters of the novel are distinguished by their attitude to this "reality." There are, Brown states, "only two possible attitudes in Port-au-Prince, the rational and the irrational, misery or gaiety ... the gaiety of despair." The dedicated are committed to belief in another order of things, and thus an attempt to change the irrational horror. The others, the comedians, obsessed for one reason or another with the fortuitous, chaotic aspects of existence, live their lives as a series of deliberately assumed parts. They persist in pursuing the "confused comedy of our private lives" against a background of absolutes that drain their concerns of meaning. Brown fails to make love to his mistress, an Ambassador's wife, in the swimming-pool where the Minister for Social Welfare has just killed himself.

> The corpse in the pool seemed to turn our preoccupations into comedy. It belonged to a more tragic theme; we were a sub-plot affording a little light relief.

Dr. Magiot, the Communist, and Mr. Smith, the American vegetarian ex-presidential candidate, are both directly concerned more with large realities than with the fluctuating *comédie humaine*. Both, as a result, suffer from a certain limiting innocence about human motivation. Magiot is unaware of Brown's devious reasons for his one decisive action, and Brown says of him: "He saw the future of his country clearer than the fate of the individuals who composed it." He knows Haiti is hopeless and is committed to its tragedy; he has a grave, straightforward nobility and dies a martyr's death as a calculated risk. The Smiths arrive, after their absurd political gesture in a tolerant democracy, to found a vegetarian centre to purge the Haitian

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nature of bloodthirstiness and "passion." They do not suffer, and thus remain comic; unlike the quiet American they cause no great damage with their simple ideals. The largesse they throw to the beggars brings only bloody retribution on the beggars, but Mrs. Smith does save Brown from interrogation by the Tontons with a storm of *normal*, rational indignation in grammar-book French. They are this side of caricature; their marriage is convincing in its ideal warmth; they are shrewd enough to see the political corruption. Brown tells them they are "Not comic. Heroic." But their heroism, beside Magiot's, has a mythical, other-worldly quality. There is a beautiful description of Mr. Smith, disporting himself innocently in the fatal swimming-pool.

> There in the pool, avoiding the gardener's rake, swam Mr. Smith, wearing a pair of dark grey nylon bathing pants which billowed out behind him in the water, giving him the huge hindquarters of some prehistoric beast. He swam slowly up and down, using the breast-stroke and grunting rhythmically. When he saw me he stood up in the water like a myth. His breasts were covered with long strands of white hair.

TO THE COMEDIANS a sense of aimlessness brings a need for pretence. Brown himself, bred in Monte Carlo, lives off his wits in a world of casinos and hotels. "Transience was my pigmentation," he says, and speaks of "the baroque towers that had dominated my childhood—a vision of grown-up life, the palace of chance where anything at all might happen, as I had well enough proved." "Major" Jones, an ex-Ensa entertainer, who cherishes a dream of being a real soldier, has two favourite phrases: "you never know" and "this is a good place." Brown's mother, promiscuous in the grand manner, cheater of Jesuits, heroine of the Resistance, is, Brown claims, "an accomplished comedian" and writes to her lover, the huge Negro, Marcel, "As long as we pretend, we escape. Pretend that I love you like a mistress. Pretend that I would die for you and you would die for me." Brown comments that he and his Martha would not die for love; they belong to comedy, not tragedy. But, confronted with violence, the comedians find out that comedy and tragedy are not altogether distinguishable. Haiti is not "a good place"; the tourists have left; and "an empty casino is worse than an empty tomb." Brown's mother dies in old age of passion, Marcel hangs himself in earnest, Jones dies keeping up the pretence that he is an expert in guerilla warfare. Even Brown, in a fit of real violent jealousy exposes himself to danger in order to get Jones away from the safety of

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Martha's embassy and expose him in his turn. He says:

> We are the faithless; we admire the dedicated, the Dr. Magiots and the Mr. Smiths for their courage and their integrity, for their fidelity to a cause, but through timidity, or lack of sufficient zest, we find ourselves the only ones truly committed—committed to the whole world of evil and good, to the wise and the foolish, to the indifferent and to the mistaken.

To the empty casino for want of the empty tomb.

Captain Concasseur, the sinister Tonton Macoute, tells Brown in a brothel (where Brown has gone to purge his impotence) that he (Concasseur) is "in favour of jokes. They have political value. They are a release for the cowardly and the impotent." Brown claims that he sees God now, not as the tragic sufferer of *lacrimae rerum*, but in this context, as an "authoritative practical joker" driving the comedians to "the extreme point of comedy," the audience's statement "I laughed till the tears came." At the end of the novel Brown dreams of Jones' death. Dying, Jones tells him "is in my part." He has a comic line. "I have to say—just look at these bloody rocks—'This is a good place,' and everyone laughs till the tears come. Then you say 'To hold the bastards up?' and I reply, 'I didn't mean that.'"

In the preface to *The End of the Affair* Greene quotes a passage from Baron von Hügel which seems to me to be at the root of his exploration of comedy. Von Hügel speaks of

> "the purification and slow constitution of the Individual into a Person by means of the Thing-element, the apparently blind Determinism of Natural Law and Natural Happenings. Nothing can be more certain than that we must admit and place this undeniable, increasingly obtrusive element and power *somewhere* in our lives: if we do not own it as a means it will grip us as our end."

In both *The End of the Affair* and *The Comedians* there are characters who, living amongst physical and political violence, whilst apparently seeing this "blind Determinism" as an end, an absolute, are in fact using it as a means to becoming a "Person," a purification in a religious sense. "Death" as Brown says of Marcel "is a proof of sincerity" and Brown decides that Jones, in all his devious life, "had been engaged on a secret and hopeless love-affair with virtue"—for which he dies. In *The Comedians* the theological emphasis is less shrill and less overt than in the earlier novel. But both Jones and Martha represent innocent goodness unaware of itself. The distressing thing is that neither of these

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characters is convincing. Jones is ultimately cardboard—it is by sleight of hand that Mr. Greene convinces us that he has charm, or makes women laugh. As a confidence trickster his ancestry is literary; he does not belong in real Haiti. Martha, whose adultery, like Sarah's in *The End of the Affair*, is seen partly as a misplaced desperate search for truth, who "plays no part" and whose love for her child is "real" and the "real" reason for Brown's love for her, is, unfortunately, both unconvincing and uninteresting as a woman. She is a characterless voice, provoking Brown's reflections about his "dark Brown world." This unreality mars the final sequence when Brown, ambiguously moved by jealousy and Dr. Magiot, takes Jones to the hills and death. A man cannot be really jealous in the context of two comic literary types. Brown himself nevertheless comes off better. Like the heroes of *A Burnt-out Case* and *The Quiet American*, he convicts himself of indifference. Jones' funeral sermon contains the statement that "Violence can be the expression of love, indifference never. One is an imperfection of charity, the other the perfection of egoism." Querry was "burnt-out" by egoism—the indifferent egoism of the artist. "Self-expression is a hard and selfish thing. It eats everything, even the self." The burning out of Querry was morally ambiguous, and it is uncertain whether Brown—who uses "novelist" metaphors of himself at moments of self-condemnation—has betrayed Jones (and Marcel) out of egoism, or violent and imperfect love. He is still becoming a Person—at the age of sixty—when the book ends. Dr. Magiot tells him, however, in a final letter "We are both humanists." And the novel, as a whole, endorses this judgment.

Indifference is Brown's temptation, not sexual aggression. It is arguable that the slightly "dated" literary quality of Jones and Martha is refreshing because they come—as standard types—from an older fictional world where action was real and important. Too many contemporary novelists would have found the temptation to make an automatic Freudian myth of the story irresistible—to make the violence of Haiti into a symbolic extension of Brown's libido. One never feels, with Graham Greene, that the roots of all violence are neatly located in our own, or the hero's sexual fantasy—and this is curiously liberating and palliates the sexual flimsiness of his heroine. In an essay on Mauriac Mr. Greene observed, "With the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act." And it is not only, he concludes, action that has become unreal.

> The novelist, perhaps unconsciously aware of his predicament, took refuge in the subjective novel. It was as if he thought that by mining into layers of personality hitherto untouched he could unearth the secret of "importance" but in these mining operations he lost yet another dimension. The visible world for him ceased to exist as completely as the spiritual.

I began by saying that Mr. Greene's Haiti and his violence are real. His novels are not subjective. For him the visible world and the spiritual world do exist. He describes them with skill, economy and authority, and for this, above all, we are grateful.

A. S. Byatt

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John Hawkes

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SINCE 1949, John Hawkes has been producing uncompromisingly difficult and often extraordinarily beautiful fiction. Although his most recent novel, *Second Skin* (published in America in 1964) may have gained him some measure of the public attention he deserves, his writing remains radically idiosyncratic, original, and isolated. While one could, especially in reference

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to his early work, evoke the names of Kafka, Djuna Barnes, or Nathanael West, Hawkes does not show any important literary influences. Nor does he refer us, in the manner of Alain Robbe-Grillet or Michel Butor, for example, to a set of philosophical assumptions which demand a "new novel." While he shares the French novelists' impatience with the conventions that make the novel a popular and comfortable form—illusion of intimacy with the storyteller, involvement with the protagonist, exploration of a recognisable milieu—his experiments in distortion, dislocation and fantasy seem determined more by a sense of the effect to be gained by a twisting of traditional narrative modes. His primary concerns are rhetorical and stylistic, in the largest sense: he seeks to rewrite the world in depth, to realise, through exploitation of the illogical, grotesque, and obsessive, the full range of a reader's potential reactions.

His first novel, *The Cannibal*, is a nightmare which, in effect and technique, reminds us most of the Surrealists. Yet, while Hawkes has never renounced the intransigent anti-realism displayed in *The Cannibal*, one is forced, in talking about *Second Skin* and the novel that immediately preceded it, *The Lime Twig*, to use a term like "clarity" to describe their almost classical economy and harmony of form. "Clarity" is misleading if it suggests ease in approach or a conventionally novelistic lucidity about "human nature," but it correctly characterises the brilliance of representation that Hawkes has achieved. By the persistent creation of order, structure, and coherence within his hallucinated imaginings, in *Second Skin* and *The Lime Twig* he has answered the promise of *The Cannibal* and redeemed the sense of disappointment left by his intervening work.[1]

This achievement marks a conquest within his own system. In *The Cannibal*, one found an historico-apocalyptic surrealist vision of a brutalised race, nominally the story of a German town called Spitzen-on-the-Dein on a day in 1945 when the unregenerate local patriots carry out a plot to kill the enemy occupier—a lone American who patrols a third of the nation on his motorcycle—and reassert German sovereignty in an illegible proclamation. This diseased, decaying, cannibalistic town insistently evokes another Germany—that of 1914—where an aristocratic form of life reveals its inherent sexual destructiveness, where

[1] *The Beetle Leg*, and the two short novels, *The Goose on the Grave* and *The Owl*. Only the last of these seems to me to give reward for its difficulties. Another, early, short novel, *Charivari*, was published in the anthology *New Directions: 11*.

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characters act out the assassination of Sarajevo in their private lives: the inner necessity of historical destruction is powerfully suggested, and the analogical, even allegorical dimension of the novel is vividly apprehended. But the narrative of human events, personal relationships, tends to become lost. Hawkes' imaginative energy is expended on somewhat static descriptions of peripheral gestures of which the narrative status is unclear. Near the end of the novel, for example, we come upon a three-page description of the midnight attempt by the Duke—"an orderly man, not given to passion"—to dismember a fox he has killed:

> . . . he began to dislike the slippery carcass. It took all his ingenuity to find, in the mess, the ears to take as trophy, to decide which were the parts with dietician's names and which to throw away. At one moment, concentrating his energies, he thought he was at the top of it, then found he was at the bottom, thought he had the heart in his hand, and the thing burst, evaporating from his fingers. He should have preferred to have his glasses, but they were at home—another mistake. It was necessary to struggle, first holding the pieces on his lap, then crouching above the pile, he had to pull, to poke, and he resented the dullness of the blade. . . .

This passage superbly evokes the historical savagery, frustration, and lack of control which have overtaken the inhabitants of Hawkes' world. But this world is known only in such momentary "shots," projected and distorted by an intense illumination, tending towards the status of surrealist image rather than towards any overall narrative coherence. And while we have to a degree been accustomed by Joyce, Faulkner, and others, to such a refusal to focus on the essential, we are here further confounded by the lack of an identifiable narrative tone, any point of view, however partial, obtuse, or unreliable, that would tell us how we should "take" Duke and fox. Conventions are the reassuring fossils of narrative attitudes, and unconventionality makes the reader feel a need for the orientation provided by a strong point of view.

But if an author revives convention in a certain manner, he can force it to do the work of point of view. This is what Hawkes brilliantly accomplishes in *The Lime Twig*: all the unreal but comfortably familiar conventions of the "thriller" are made to organise and interpret his psychological vision. The claptrap of a sub-literary genre —gangs of thugs, rigged horseraces, violence, orgies, and murder—are given a real and terrifying existence as inescapable realisations of our unconscious desires. When Michael and Margaret Banks, a lower middle class London couple, are led into a plot to steal and race a horse for the Golden Bowl, they enter a publicised but unreal and forbidden world—a transgression which leads with rigid inevitability to an accumulation of terrors. Margaret is gently, urgently beaten to death by the gangster Thick in a scene which she accepts as "something they couldn't even show in films"—a region unrevealed by conventional presentations of horror, and censored by the waking self. Michael undergoes an extraordinary night of orgy—realisation of all the erotic fantasies that attracted him to the outlaw—where he passes from the teasing whore Sybilline to the incarnation of his coveted London neighbour, "a girl he had seen through windows in several dreams unremembered, unconfessed." The morning brings, as if with moral inevitability, the shooting of a young girl (another inhabitant of his dreams) and Michael's strange "atonement": throwing himself under the horses in the home stretch of the race, to die mangled by the magnificent sensual beasts he idolised.

At the end of *The Lime Twig*, the Scotland-Yard types made familiar by the cinema—trench coats and black Bentleys—arrive, investigate, and set off to uncover "the particulars of this crime": a return of the convention which serves to remind us that the reassuring world to which it refers has gone under in a dark rite of sexuality and destructiveness. While in recent years both Robbe-Grillet and Butor have used the form of the detective story to suggest the deceptive quality of reality, the way it disappoints our efforts to find an underlying plot, Hawkes manipulates his convention to suggest the deeper reality of our attraction to the criminally violent and repulsive. As in myth and folktale, the fulfilment of our most profound desires is an accursed thing, for our passions are ultimately destructive of the self.

Hawkes' horror and terror have no metaphysical dimension: they are built into the banal and the quotidian. Hence the setting of *The Lime*

Jan Pen

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Twig is an England rather like that of "Sweeney Among the Nightingales"—a disorderly, greasy world peopled by drab and vaguely sinister men in mocha brown—constantly on the verge of becoming a Joycean Nighttown, where the self's orgy creates Circean tranformations. A decaying Turkish bath, with its befogging heat and wet—"no place here for undervests or socks, tie clasp or an address written out on paper"—naturally becomes the scene of elusive encounters, murder, escape. In a public lavatory, the shady figures we instinctively fear do, in fact, turn out to be thugs armed with explosives, looking for us. Hawkes no longer needs the surrealistic imagery of *The Cannibal*, for here a slight pressure upon the conventional will produce the terrible. Here, the tone of hallucination is neutral, controlled, matter-of-fact, as when two of the gangsters strip the Banks' flat:

> They took out the tools of the trade and in half an hour shredded the plant that the cat had soiled, broke the china quietly in a towel, stripped linen from the bed and all clothing out of the cupboards and drawers and closets, drank from the bottle found with the duster and pail. They cut the stuffing in bulky sawdust layers away from the frames of the furniture, gutted the mattress.
>
> The high bells were ringing and Sparrow and Thick were done sawing the wood of the furniture into handy lengths, in sheeted bundles had carried out to the van the wood and the pieces of lingerie and puffy debris of their work. Bare walls, bare floors, four empty rooms containing no scrap of paper, no figured piece of jewellery or elastic garment, no handwriting specimen by which the identity of the former occupants could be known: it was a good job, a real smashing; and at dusk, on a heath just twenty miles from Aldington, they stopped and dumped the contents of the van into a quagmire round which the frogs were croaking. The two men smoked cigarettes in the gloom and then drove on.

This precisely detailed realisation of a basic fear—loss of identity, loss of the self—slowly takes shape in a quiet, controlled, even humorous prose. We submit to the nightmare without wanting to, without being able to summon the power to protest. Such a style, such representations created from a slight rewriting of immediately apprehended conventions, permit the narrative coherence that *The Cannibal* lacked. None of the earlier novel's visual presence has been sacrificed, but here the story develops with a feverish exactitude to its final horrifying release. *The Lime Twig* is a gothic tale, but it is also a stark and beautifully formed object. While it does not pretend to clear up all its peripheral difficulties, or to impose an external logic on its theme, it finally leaves us with a sense of overwhelming lucidity about our relations to others, and to ourselves, a monstrous clarity about our passions.

Second Skin is a denser and more opaque book because it depends on a point of view both unreliable and banal. Its mode is apologetic: Skipper, bald, ageing naval officer, fat, sweating paradigm of incompetence, writes the "naked history" of his life to prove that despite the series of "brutal acts" to which he has been subjected, he is a man of both "love and courage." His apology necessarily takes the form of a series of isolated acts, arrested moments—a narrative method appropriate to Hawkes' scenic imagination—which he must attempt to understand and explain. The structure of his tale—complex, illogical, and emotionally effective—is the product of his combined evasiveness and sincerity.

Skipper sees reality as a "plot," but one which can be defeated by the nauseating repetition of love, softness, and solicitude. To the reader, this love, undiscriminating, misdirected, and repellent, at first seems simply a flaccid and inadequate response to the sexuality and brutality which surround Skipper. His courage hence appears mostly a pose: when his daughter is being raped by three soldiers under a cactus in the desert (and, we suspect, rather enjoying it), he holds her hand and murmurs "Courage." But at the centre of Hawkes' novel there is something more important than incompetence. There is, once again,

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nightmare, a sense of total helplessness, the frustrated inability to make gesture accord with intention. With compulsive rapidity, the brutal acts of the obsessive plot take us deeper and deeper into the past—through the mutiny led by Tremlow aboard the *U.S.S. Starfish* (why? to what end? Skipper's inability to comprehend Tremlow's malevolence leaves a void in the account: "There seemed to be a purpose in that struggle, but still it escaped me"), through the murder of his son-in-law in a brothel, to the original, most brutal act of all: his father's suicide while Skipper, then a fat, blubbering child, tried to persuade him to live by playing the cello outside the locked bathroom door. When this is followed by two other suicides (his wife's, and that of his daughter, Cassandra) we understand that Skipper's tale, his cloying affirmation of love and life, is a response to the sense that he is surrounded and inhabited by death, that he virtually is himself death, and that everything he touches, despite his good intentions, turns to dust and blood.

The transformation of this curse, this legendary touch of death, into a blessing, may be accomplished on a "gentle island" where he can nurture a society of protection and love around Cassandra and her daughter Pixie. But his chosen Arcadia (a jagged, barren island off the Maine coast) turns out to be inhabited by lustful widows, priapic fishermen, and imbecilic, foul-smelling adolescents, all of whom conspire to baffle Skipper and satisfy what we now know to be Cassandra's considerable desires—even to her death. This disastrous establishment marks the end of Skipper's baffled attempt to deal with the treacherous world of passions. His "victory" is achieved rather in a "land of spices," a floating island where, with the assistance of his loyal messboy Sonny and assorted native females (Big Bertha, Sister Josie, and the pregnant Catalina Kate) he performs the function of artificial inseminator of cows. The impregnation of Sweet Phyllis is a lush pastoral rite which sounds as his personal triumph over ineptitude, mismanaged passion, and death:

> Late afternoon and only faint sounds of breathing, brief shifting activity in the shadows, and Sonny was embracing the smooth alerted head while Catalina Kate and Josie were posted on her starboard side, were rubbing and soothing and curving against her starboard side and Bertha, Big Bertha, was tending the port. And I was opposite from Sonny and knew just what to do, just how to do it—reaching gently into the blind looking glass with my eye on the blackbird on Sonny's cap—and at the very moment that the loaded pipette might have disappeared inside, might have slipped from sight forever, I leaned forward quickly and gave a little puff into the tube—it broke the spell, in a breath lodged Oscar firmly in the centre of the windless unsuspecting cave that would grow to his presence like a new world and void him, one day, onto the underground waters of the mysterious grove—and pulled back quickly, slapped her rump, tossed the flexible spent pipette in the direction of the catchel and grinned as the whole tree burst into the melodious racket of the dense tribe of blackbirds cheering for our accomplished cow.

This prose, so different from that of either *The Cannibal* or *The Lime Twig*, has a luminous warmth which confers upon the scene, ludicrous and vulgar as it may be, some of the beauty and mystery of creation. Artificial insemination, reconciling impotence with fecundity, is the appropriate response to helplessness: Skipper's messy bovine peace, his surrender to nudity, pregnancy, and warmth, assumes a certain weird validity as an answer to the world of brutal acts. When, at the end of the novel, on All Saints' Night, Sonny, Kate, and Skipper, with the newborn baby (whether Sonny's or Skipper's is unknown, and no one cares), visit the cemetery and decorate a grave to look like a birthday cake, the dead celebrate life and the living celebrate the dead. There is reconciliation—"yesterday the birth, last night the grave, this morning the baby in my arms"—and the extravagance of rape and suicide seems rather more unreal than Skipper's survival. Resistance to Tremlows ceases to matter. Helplessness is transformed into slimy beauty and organic peace.

While *Second Skin* lacks the stark and horrifying lucidity of *The Lime Twig*, it has—as the passage quoted suggests—its own clarity: a clarity of the senses, a clarity of emotional landscapes rendered in full sensuous dimension. Hawkes' success is a question of total style; his senses and his imagination are alive, and his control of language—the choice of word and of intonation, the rhythms and the colouring—is remarkable. The brilliance of the moment found in *The Cannibal* has been shaped into an overall vision which we accept as coherent and intelligent. Hawkes' mature clarity finally convinces us that his difficulties are not diversionary or merely fashionable; the reader's effort is rewarded by the discovery of new terrors and beauties.

Peter Brooks

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PRESS

Anglo-American Differences

I NOW GET the *Washington Post* sent to me in England every day. The postman, labouring under the load, does not like it—or me. But I formed a taste for American newspapers while I was in the United States, and I would not now like to be without one. It is not that they are better than British newspapers—or are they?—but that they serve a function which I find stimulating. They are, even the largest, newspapers of their communities.

"TOWARD A ONE-PAPER TOWN" is the title of the first section in the late A. J. Liebling's collection of his occasional pieces on the American press. "American cities with competing newspapers," he wrote, "will soon be as rare as those with two telephone systems.... What you have in a one-paper town is a privately owned public utility that is constitutionally exempt from public regulation." It is the orthodox lament. But a one-paper town is still better than a no-paper town; and, although some of the monopoly newspapers in American cities and towns are debased and deadly, plenty are independent and lively. Moreover, the trend is not all one way. "With much-publicised anguish, 403 dailies have suspended publication in the last twenty years. But, with considerably less fanfare, almost an equal number have been started in the same period" (*Newsweek*, 29 November 1965). Established newspapers which have maintained their independence and integrity; rejuvenated newspapers like the *Boston Globe*; some of the prosperous new newspapers which have acknowledged their responsibilities: all have shown that the local newspaper in America can both survive *and* serve its community.

"In Great Britain, where the London newspapers circulate everywhere, the regional journals cannot dent the London monopoly of news and opinion," said Liebling. "The typical American monopoly is local rather than national. The big-city papers, since they do not arrive, cannot dent the local monopoly." It is a familiar comparison, but it is not at all clear that the London monopoly in Britain is preferable to the local monopolies in America.

ONE OF THE STATES in America which interested me most was North Carolina. It has come to grips with its racial problems with considerably more foresight and intelligence than other Southern states (and, it may well be shown, than most Northern cities); it has begun to tackle the problems of its rapid urbanisation with an equal foresight and intelligence; in recent years, it has produced two notable Governors, Luther Hodges and Terry Sanford. It is a state with a predictably prosperous and peaceful future. Across it—from Kinston in the east to Greenville in the west—stretches a great arc of small and medium-sized towns, most of which are similar enough to allow comparisons. It was possible, in other words, to move from one to the other, and ask: "Why have things gone well here... but not so well here?"

Wherever things had gone well, there was an independent and lively local newspaper, usually with a remarkable editor. Jonathan Daniels, the editor of the *News and Observer* in Raleigh, is a stocky, radical patriot: radical in the most straightforward sense, caring for freedom of speech and thought, caring for the underdog, with a keen nose for corruption, privilege, and brutality, and the courage to expose them; and a patriot in a straightforward sense, too, wishing that his country—his state—his town—should be that much more civilised and kindly. He reminded me instantly of the greatest editor I have known: A. P. Wadsworth, of the *Manchester Guardian* (as it then still was, in name and spirit). Wadsworth bred among the mill towns of Lancashire, Daniels among the mill towns of North Carolina: the parallel is provocative.

East, along this great arc of North Carolina towns, lies Goldsboro. The editor of the *News-Argus* there is Henry Belk, a huge man of six-foot-eight, who is now almost blind. He has edited his paper for forty years. It has a circulation of only 15,000—but, as I was told again and again, an influence out of all proportion to the size of its readership. Goldsboro, in the past decade, has followed as sensible and successful a course in its race relations as any town in the South, even in North Carolina, and the leaders in the community, white and Negro, give a large part of the credit to Belk and the *News-Argus*. Belk, in fact, talked to me of the long tradition of leadership among North Carolina editors and publishers: Joe Caldwell, who founded and edited the independent and pro-

HENRY FAIRLIE *has just moved to the United States to take up residence in Washington as a British foreign correspondent. His contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include "From Walpole to Macmillan" (February 1961), "The Monarchy" (October 1961), "The Idiot Box" (March 1962), and "On the Comforts of Anger" (July 1963).*

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gressive *Charlotte Observer*; Josephus Daniels, of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, of course; Roland Beasley, of the *Monroe Journal*, who was especially active in such matters as the state's child labour laws; and W. O. Saunders, of the *Elizabeth City Independent*, a born nonconformist, who was frequently threatened—and shot at—for the attitudes he took, and upheld, in his paper.

They are not famous names, but it seems to me absurd to write about the American press without first acknowledging that, across the length and breadth of the country, such papers and such men are to be found. At critical moments, when a muster is needed, they are, perhaps, fewer than one could wish. Frank E. Smith, a courageous native of Mississippi, who was defeated for the re-nomination to his seat in the House of Representatives in 1962, and is now on the board of the Tennessee Valley Authority, has written recently (in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*) of the South during the past decade:

> The church was not brave, with notable individual exceptions, but neither was an institution supposedly proud of a tradition of freedom. Southern newspapers as a whole (once again, with notable individual exceptions) failed to raise their editorial voices in defence of a moderate position and, even worse, failed to present a full and accurate picture in their news columns of what was going on.

But the exceptions are too numerous to be discounted so easily; to an outsider, the surprise is that there were any at all in the atmosphere existing in the South between 1954 and 1964.

Even in Mississippi—"the closed state"—there have been oases of sense and moderation. One such is Greenville: and, in Greenville, the *Democrat-Times* is edited by Hodding Carter, and he and his paper have consistently given leadership to the community. Or, again, although I never reached Holmes County, Mississippi, I will never forget the words used to me by one of the attorneys in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice: "I'll put you in a situation, if that is what you want.... Go and see Hazel Smith, the editor of a local weekly, the *Lexington Advertiser*. She's emotional. Boy, does she have problems! But she is a very lively and courageous woman.... Yes, you go and see her; and go and see her arch-enemy, the publisher of the *Lexington Herald*. Boy, will you find yourself in a situation!"... This was a tough—if exuberant—civil rights attorney, used to working "in the field," talking about the local press in a small town, in a backward rural county, of the reputedly most "closed" state in the South. It is not evidence which can be ignored.

One could extend the catalogue—how much, for example, does Atlanta, Georgia, owe to the leadership of Ralph McGill's *Atlanta Constitution*? But the diversity of the American press, even in the South, may perhaps best be illustrated from one other Southern state. The ruling Democrats in Virginia, the "Byrd organisation," tried to meet the Supreme Court decision of 1954, which ordered the de-segregation of the public school system, by a policy of "massive resistance." Throughout this difficult, and agonising, period, the *Daily Progress* in Charlottesville was moderately, but timidly, critical of "massive resistance"; the *News-Leader* in Richmond was its most doctrinaire and articulate supporter; and the *Virginian Pilot* in Norfolk was outspokenly opposed to it: these three distinct voices—and others could be counted—all spoke in a situation in which every pressure, social and economic, was used to obtain conformity.

Again, during the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, it was a linotype operator of the *News-Argus* in Goldsboro who infiltrated the Klan, became a member of its inner councils in North Carolina, and came back to the office and reported everything to Henry Belk; and it was one of Jonathan Daniels' reporters who found a cell of the Klan in Kinston in 1958, and exposed it in the *News and Observer*. To ignore this tradition is to ignore a large part of the vitality of the American press, even in the "one-paper town." It was, after all, the *Boston Globe* which did the job of exposing in detail the career of Francis Xavier Morrissey (the nominee of the Kennedy family to the Federal bench in Boston), and, in doing so, was able to call on the help of a Georgia newspaper to uncover the legal "qualifications" which he had obscurely obtained in that state. It was the *Daily News* in Chicago which recently revealed "payments totalling more than $70,000 by a lobbyist and racetrack spokesman to a high state official who, at the time of the payments was a member of the legislature"; and it was the *American* in Chicago which actually produced tape-recordings which documented "a hotel-room discussion between lobbyists of the going price for state legislators."

Local Papers

The battle between local interests and the local press is not all one-sided, although the more craven publishers—as last year in Houston—may make it seem so. Fat and smug, out of date and timid, although many of them are, the local newspapers in America have immense reserves, intangible as well as tangible. There are signs that, as a new generation takes

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over, as one here sets an example to another there, more and more of them will begin to use their opportunities responsibly and creatively.

In fact, their monopoly position in their towns *can* be a source of strength. Frank Smith made this point, in criticising the part played by newspapers in the South between 1954 and 1964:

> The newspaper in a directly competitive situation has some justification for avoiding the economic retaliation that could completely destroy generations of family investment and achievement.... In most towns and cities of the South, however, the economic facts of journalistic life had long since developed newspaper monopolies largely invulnerable to destruction....

Moreover, the advertising on which the local newspapers rely is not the kind which makes pressure either easy or likely. It consists mostly of display advertising by local supermarkets and other big stores, an intensely competitive advertising, which none of them would dare to withdraw (since there is no other effective way of securing such publicity); and, of course, of small ads., which by their nature cannot be used for exerting pressure. The dangers of the "one-paper town" can be greatly exaggerated.

The much greater danger is that the proprietorship of the local newspaper is part of the town's "establishment"—or "power structure," to use the currently fashionable phrase. But it is precisely here that I believe a change may be taking place. It is partly a matter of change of generation, an ageing publisher succeeded by his son; it is partly a result of the changes which are beginning to take place in the "power structures" in American towns and cities; but it is partly, also, a result of the pressure of the reading public itself. This public is becoming much more aware of the problems of urban life, and of the inadequate response of the established political leaders to them. In this atmosphere, the local newspaper has an opportunity which it needs less than courage to seize. The readers want aggressive journalism, and the monopoly or near-monopoly newspaper is in a strong enough position to give it. The will must be there, in publisher and/or editor; but the economic base is strong, and there is every reason why the local newspaper in America should revive, as a public voice, in the next decade.

THERE ARE two lessons which the local newspaper in America can teach the languishing provincial press in Britain. Comparisons must, of course, be made carefully, but too much is made of the geographical and demographic differences between the two countries.

First, there is the kind of advertising on which the local American newspapers rely. This is, by and large, of three kinds: ordinary small ads.; real estate advertising; and supermarket advertising. Daily newspapers in Britain, such as the *Manchester Evening News,* have shown that they are able to attract small ads. in as large numbers as most, if not all, comparable newspapers in the United States. But, in the other two categories, British newspapers lag behind. The real estate advertising in the American press strikes an outsider as phenomenal. It reflects, of course, the society: particularly, the competitiveness of private building and property development, and the astonishing mobility of the American family. Although neither of these conditions (at least, in the same degree) exist in Britain, it is hard not to believe that, given enterprising advertising management, real estate advertising could become a much larger and more reliable source of income for British newspapers. At present, it is mostly confined to "quality" national newspapers, daily and Sunday, and to local weeklies. It has certainly not been fully exploited by provincial daily newspapers, such as the *Birmingham Post* or the *Western Daily Press.*

But it is the retail—especially the supermarket—advertising in the American press which really astonishes an outsider. Day after day, but especially towards the end of the week, the American newspaper carries page after page—as often as not, double-page "spreads"—of supermarket advertising, the emphasis being on the prices which the competing supermarkets are offering during that week or for the coming week-end. This advertising is relentless, and again, of course, it reflects the society: the competitiveness of the whole economic system, and of retailing in particular. The advertising, moreover, is not only of immense benefit to the newspapers, and to the stores and supermarkets themselves: it is also a form of community service.

Outside the local weeklies, there is very little retail advertising in Britain at all. The public is, in general, urged to buy, say, a television set, not by the retailer, but by the manufacturer. But, with the growth of the supermarket, and with the first attack on resale price maintenance, this advertising should be growing automatically, and could be stimulated to grow. "Following the population," *Newsweek* reported recently of the newspapers which have grown up in the United States, "almost all are in the suburbs and exurbs; many have been spectacularly successful. On New York's suburban Long Island, *Newsday*—founded in a garage by the late Alicia Patterson in 1940—today is choked with supermarket and retail advertising ads., and has a circulation of 400,000,

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more than that of two of the six major dailies in nearby New York City." Within the circulation area of London's evening newspapers, there is no comparable success story; and (since the south-east is a rapidly developing area) it is hard to find any excuse but lack of enterprise.[1]

THE SECOND LESSON which local American newspapers have to teach is one which many of them have to re-learn themselves. Active "city" journalism has a long pedigree in America. "The city beat was for some... a literary academy. The professors were tough city editors, the classrooms were docks, jails, morgues and hospitals, and the dormitories were the cheap rooming houses which were all that salaries of five to fifteen dollars a week could command."[2] Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Stephen Crane, David Graham Phillips, Ring Lardner, Ernest Hemingway, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Alfred Henry Lewis, Richard Harding Davis... the list is as familiar as it is romantic. But the line has been a little faint in recent years, as the old city reporting has declined: it has, in fact, been bastardised, and become what Dwight Macdonald has called "para-journalism"; "having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism, and the atmospheric licence of fiction."

Macdonald used the term in a piece in the *New York Review of Books*, in which he methodically took apart the "para-journalism" of Tom Wolfe. But, if Wolfe is "the king of the cats," the more interesting example is James Breslin, also of the *New York Herald Tribune*'s stable. Breslin is exactly the kind of journalist who, a generation or more ago, would have practised his trade and his craft on the "city beat"; and, on this beat, would have disciplined his all too "natural" talent. He could have become a wonderful reporter.[3] Instead, he has "arrived" on the *Herald Tribune* at exactly the moment at which, in a desperate search for circulation, it has abandoned almost all but pretence to old-fashioned journalist virtues, and resorted to gimmicks.

It is trying—a perfectly laudable ambition—to carve out a niche for itself as New York's own city newspaper. But it is not trying to do this by detailed and searching reporting. Instead, it has turned to two devices. For five months last year, it ran a superficially ambitious, but actually bogus, series: "CITY IN CRISIS." This consisted of features about the general problems of New York, which could well have been (perhaps were) executed inside the office, and any handy news story which could be lifted into a page "lead"—sometimes even a page one "lead." At the same time, it has more and more turned to the kind of "impressionistic" writing of which Dwight Macdonald complains: this flowers most exotically in its Sunday magazine, *New York*, but its influence runs through the whole paper.

The *Herald Tribune*'s anti-journalism is the worst example of the American newspapers' neglect of the reporting—especially the city reporting—which helped to make them. The *Washington Post*, for example, publishes a section, "CITY LIFE," and another, "AREA NEWS"; but both are predictable, routine and dull. Yet Washington, partly because it is the Federal capital, and partly because it is the only American city with a Negro majority, ought to be a reporter's paradise. Whatever its new managing editor, Ben Bradlee, may do—and he has the opportunity, under a resilient publisher, to make it one of the country's great newspapers—he could do worse than begin by creating a lively city desk, ensuring that his city reporters include some of his best reporters, and paying them appropriately. It has been said that, for less money than it takes to hire a good reporter, an American editor can fill his news hole with "anything from James Reston to Steve Canyon." But one good city reporter is what every American newspaper requires, even more than it needs a syndicated columnist or comic.

All the same, the reporting of the affairs of their own cities, towns and neighbourhoods is the mark of most American, as distinct from most comparable British, newspapers. Most of them, to this extent, are genuine community newspapers: certainly to an extent which cannot be said of most of the provincial press in Britain. But here—as in any discussion of the press—one is brought face to face with important national differences.

[1] In the comparatively small Berkshire town in which I live, there are perhaps five retail stores which deserve to be called supermarkets, and scores of other retailers in alleged competition with them and with each other. To the east and west, lie two much larger towns, Slough and Reading, with proportionately more (and larger) supermarkets and general stores. The whole area is a unit, and has been a growing one for the past thirty years. But it was only in 1965 that a local evening newspaper, appearing daily, began to be published.

[2] Bernard A. Weisberger, *The American Newspaperman* (University of Chicago Press, 1961).

[3] He has many of the qualities. Some time back, when he interviewed a national politician, the politician had to leave the room for a moment. Breslin immediately went through the papers on his desk, and used the meat of one of them in his column. When the politician complained that this was not a very honest thing to do, Breslin retorted that, in asking for the interview, he had not claimed to be an honest man—but a journalist: a retort with a very respectable—or, rather, unrespectable—lineage.

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THE AMERICAN PRESS reflects a country, not only of immense size and distances, but of unbelievable diversity, not least in its political arrangements. Moreover, this diverse political activity is ceaseless and—at least in its forms—public. I attended one of the editorial conferences of the *Washington Post*. I was struck by the length of the news schedules for the day—twelve closely typed foolscap pages—but even more by the way in which story after story, in the "national" and "area" schedules, grew out of some public political, semi-political, or quasi-political activity. It is true that the *Post* was then content to report these stories in a routine and dull way. But the open political activity of the United States, at every level, does provide the American newspaper with a function—and an opportunity, not always taken—which does not exist in Britain. (A public school board in America is far more active, far more open, and far more important, than its equivalent in this country.)

Nevertheless, the American newspapers made me reflect on how little effort the local newspapers in Britain make to report the political activity of their communities. There is, for example, usually some interesting political manoeuvre, if not actual skulduggery, in the selection of a party candidate, especially in a safe constituency. But the reporting of the selection process by local newspapers is, as often as not, ill-informed and timid. The examples could be multiplied. The political affairs of any great city, such as Manchester or Glasgow, deserve far more relentless and fearless reporting than, say, the Manchester *Guardian* or the *Glasgow Herald* gives them. My impression is that, of the larger provincial newspapers, only the *Birmingham Post* attempts any consistently inquisitive local political reporting. American newspapers may have become slack and sluggish in reporting the significant daily happenings within their communities. But British newspapers, by comparison, are almost uniformly negligent.

YET IT IS IN this direction, I believe, that one should look for a revival of the "power of the press." It is a myth that the political affairs of a nation have become so centralised that there is no significant local activity to investigate or report. Even the most centralised decision has usually to be carried out at the local level, through local institutions, by local personages. This is, of course, more obvious in America, and the role of the local American newspaper is therefore clearer. But the revival of active local reporting could, in both countries, help to revive journalism.

Sustained by the kind of advertising I have described, the local newspaper in America, Lord Thomson of Fleet has said, is a cash-box. There are other ways of looking at it: with so full a cash-box, the local newspaper can, if it wishes, not only live, but lead.

SOME MAY THINK that this attention to the local and provincial press is overdone. But I believe—partly, I admit, as a result of my American travels—that, in both countries, the press as an institution and journalism as a profession must exist, so to speak, in depth. As an institution, the press must draw its vitality through its own roots, spread through every corner of the country: the great newspapers of London or the Eastern seaboard are not enough. Similarly, as a profession, journalism should be able to offer a diversity of employments and existences which is possible only if there is a prosperous, healthy, and independent local and provincial press. Nevertheless, when comparisons are made between the American and British press, it is of the great, internationally known, newspapers that most people think.

It is unfair to many very good newspapers, like the *Los Angeles Times*, but the newspapers which I will have in mind from now on are: in America, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*; and, in Britain, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Guardian*, and the *Sunday Times*, the *Observer*, and the *Sunday Telegraph*. Moreover, I will be almost entirely concerned with these newspapers as carriers of political news, opinion and comment. Of newspapers of this kind and stature, the reader is entitled to ask: (*1*) news; (*2*) readability; (*3*) articulate opinion, based on consistent and intelligible attitudes; (*4*) independent comment, even if it conflicts with the opinions of the paper; (*5*) entertainment; (*6*) a format and layout which make the paper pleasant to look at and to handle. I will consider each of these attributes singly, and in this order—which I think is their order of importance.

News

ONLY TWO of these newspapers claim to be "records"—of "all the news that's fit to print," and of much that is hardly worth it. The *New York Times* obviously comes nearer than *The Times* of London to justifying this claim, if only by its sheer bulk. Increasingly, in recent years, *The Times* (London) has abandoned the effort to be a paper of "record": less and less often does it print an important speech or document in full; less and less often record

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every minor appointment in every remote corner of the earth; less and less often note the career of the junior chess champion of the Ukraine, a matter of acute interest, if it were a "record," to a minority section of its readers. But, by becoming less of a "record," it has to be admitted, it has seemed to become more of a "newspaper"; and one cannot compare the two papers without being forced to consider what news is.

A half-year's steady diet of American newspapers has persuaded me of the obvious: that news, like history, does not exist without selection. If there is not selection, the real news—*i.e.*, the significant event—may be obscured by the lesser events, chances, formalities, rituals, which accompany it. It is quite possible, by reporting too much of an event, to obscure, not only its nature, but even its happening, altogether. Without selection, too, the reporter ceases to look for news: it is too easy for him simply to file every publicly known fact, without trying to find out the fact which matters, but which may not be publicly announced. To be a "record," in fact, is to run the risk of chronicling only the publicly documented event, and not the significant event for which there is little, if any, public evidence.

This conflict is, from day to day, apparent in the different methods of the *New York Times* and *The Times* of London. It seems to me absurd to represent the information supplied by the *New York Times* as poor and sketchy. George Lichtheim, in his attack (*Commentary*, September 1965) on its foreign coverage, plainly got hold of the wrong end of the stick. He indulged—it is a pleasant pastime—in the kind of bogus analysis of a newspaper's content which is too often allowed to pass for serious criticism. Take one week's issues, or a running story, and show where it has fallen down: no newspaper can hope to come through such a trial without several black marks against it. When Lichtheim went on to try to show that the news coverage reflects "an editorial (or ambassadorial) line," he proved no more than can be proved against any newspaper—and most foreign correspondents.[4] The Washington correspondent of *The Times* of London frequently writes as if he were the public prosecutor of President Johnson, if not of the American people; and French reporting from Viet Nam does not seem to me to have been entirely uninfluenced by French official attitudes—or the memory of Dien Bien Phu.

The sins of the *New York Times* are sins of inclusion rather than omission: indeed, by including so much, it sometimes obscures to the point where it might as well be omitting. But first find the story—itself a task demanding unfaltering and intrepid application; then struggle through the opening paragraph—a grave test of nerve and skill; and finally master the rest of the story paragraph by paragraph—an exercise requiring something near to gallantry: and one will, I believe, be as well informed about what is happening in the world as by reading any other newspaper, and sometimes much better informed.

But there is, of course, no reason why it should be made so difficult, why the whole operation should be so self-defeating. The fault lies partly in the quality of some of its foreign correspondents—here Lichtheim's reproof about "ambassadorial" attitudes is (no names, no pack-drill) justified; partly in the inability of so many American newspapermen to write (a subject to which I will return) but, above all, in the inadequacy of the *New York Times'* foreign desk. To trace the origins of the paper's failings, one would like, most of all, to have access to the messages which flow from its foreign editor to its foreign correspondents, both those requesting a story and those commenting on a story after it had been received.

But, when all has been said, the *New York Times* remains a solitary achievement. Even the best British newspapers try elliptically to combine news and comment; even the best European newspapers print only bare paragraphs of news, and follow them with columns of interpretation; only the *New York Times* shovels every flake of information at its readers, in the trust that they can be their own snowploughs.

THE CONTRAST between attempting a "record" and selecting the "news" may be found in almost all the American and British newspapers I am discussing: expansive, if haphazardly so, reporting in the *Washington Post*, provocatively selective reporting in the *Guardian*; curiously detailed (and undiscriminatingly so) reporting in the *Wall Street Journal*, acutely perceptive selective reporting in the *Financial Times* (some of the best foreign news pages in the world). Two newspapers stand out, for

[4] On the other hand, some of the lapses of the *New York Times* are hard to excuse. The most recent was the prominence it gave this spring, in both its news and editorial columns, to a handout from 198 supposed Asian scholars calling for a new policy towards Communist China. Only a third of the "scholars" could in fact be called China experts and they had no right to speak for the non-political organisation whose name they used. But what was revealing was the close connection between the front-page news story and the editorial line. Had 198 "scholars" rallied to the support of the old policy, would it have got more than a paragraph?

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opposite reasons. The *New York Herald Tribune* has virtually abandoned all pretence to serious or complete foreign reporting—another sacrifice in the search for circulation and survival.[5] The *Daily Telegraph*, on the other hand, comes nearest to combining "record" with "news," although it is increasingly in danger of throwing away this virtue by restricting the length of the stories from its serious foreign correspondents, in order to accommodate more and more titbits.

The domestic reporting of all American newspapers is better than that of all British newpapers, with the exception, again, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, which has all but ceased to be a *news*paper in anything but name. This is, as I have said, partly because of the openness and vitality of American political processes, at every level. But it is also partly because American political and social debate (and behaviour) is still frequently concerned with first principles. "One man, one vote," for example, is still at issue, not only in the field of civil rights, but in the protracted debate over the reapportionment of legislative seats. Again, very few legal cases (or political debates) in Britain require or deserve the full reporting which has to be given to a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States—or, for that matter, of the highest court in Connecticut. The domestic reporting in American newspapers reflects a country which is still, for better or for worse, agitated about the meaning and the legitimacy of political actions. Hence the detailed reporting of speeches and decisions, whether made in Congress or a Parent-Teacher Association.

One specific achievement in American reporting deserves special attention. More than any other newspaper, in either country, the *Wall Street Journal* has mastered the technique of the background *news* story. I deliberately emphasise the word news, because I am not talking about what, in Britain, we tend to refer to as background pieces—rather lame attempts to sketch in the background to a news story which has already broken. The *Wall Street Journal*'s pieces—occupying pride-of-place in column 1 on page 1, and usually turning inside to occupy at least another column—are, again and again, themselves *news* stories of things which are actually happening, but which others have overlooked. They are, quite simply, "on the ball": because the developments which they uncover are vital and new; because the research and the reporting which go into them make them authoritative; and because—by the standards of American journalism—they are ably written.

They probe; they reveal; they explain; they quote. In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* has made the interesting discovery that there is news—actual *news*—in the changing arrangements by which a society orders its ordinary affairs. Two occur to me. First, a fascinating story, which revealed that aerospace and defence firms, hedging against possible cuts in space and defence expenditure, have already begun to turn their resources and skills to solving social problems at home: in other words, pursuing their hope of necessary Federal contracts, they are developing an enlightened self-interest in expanding Federal social programmes. It is hardly necessary to emphasise the political, economic, and social significance of such a story; but what concerns us here is that the whole story, datelined from El Monte, California, was a genuine piece of field-reporting, and not a background piece written in the office.[6] Another characteristic story—they appear five days a week, a remarkable journalistic enterprise—revealed the way in which more and more craft unions were opening their membership to Negroes: again, a genuine news story of compelling interest, and again executed by the fullest field reporting. Moreover, it should be noticed, the *Wall Street Journal* discovers these stories itself, and does not wait until they are pin-pointed by a crisis or a government report. They put to shame the "Insight" type of reporting which counts for a background piece in the British Sundays.

This background reporting by the *Wall Street Journal* is the clearest justification of the qualities on which the American press lays—or likes to believe that it lays—stress. Certainly, I have found myself wondering, again and again, whether British newspapers have not gone much too far in preferring readability—the attractive writing and presentation of a story—to content. The value of the *Wall Street Journal*'s example is that it shows that the two—even at a length which no British newspaper would consider—are not irreconcilable.

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[5] I am throughout speaking of the American editions of the *New York Herald Tribune*: not its European edition, which is very much better. At any rate the New York edition is now going through an "editorial fusion" with the *World-Telegram* and the *Journal-American*.

[6] The introduction to this particular story was irresistible:

"'Creating a system to warn a field army that the enemy has launched an attack of germ warfare is basically no different from creating a system to control juvenile delinquency.'

"So argues the head of a firm that has devised a biological warfare warning system for the U.S. Army and is now working on the problem of juvenile delinquency... under a $100,000 contract from the state of California."

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Readability

THAT MOST American journalists have yet to learn to write is an accepted fact of American journalism, of every kind and at every level. When I asked why the *New York Review of Books* relies so heavily on British reviewers—it has been aptly nicknamed the "London Review of Books"—the answer I was given was that there were very few American writers, of any sort, capable of good literary journalism. Gilbert Harrison, the editor-in-chief of the *New Republic,* later made much the same point to me. The easiest way to edit an American magazine, he said, was to call on European writers—he criticised *Commentary* as well as the *New York Review* on this score—and he argued that, difficult though it was, one of the most important responsibilities of an American editor was to try to find American writers capable of good journalism. Since there is now a tradition of good American writing, one can narrow the question to why so little of it—*and so little of its influence*—reaches American newspapers. The explanations I offer are impressions rather than conclusions: the lack of style in American journalism still mystifies me too much to be any more certain.

To start, literally, at the beginning: the American journalist has not mastered the art of the "lead" paragraph. This kind of slovenliness in beginning a report would not be forgiven in Britain:

> The tumult is dying down and the electoral moment of truth is soon at hand. But apathy still hangs over the city like the smog that is an almost daily irritant here.

Hard though it is to believe, this was the "lead" paragraph to a front-page story in the *Washington Post* two days before the New York City elections. It was not exceptional. Not long ago, the *New York Times* carried a despatch from Paris, which reported that:

> General de Gaulle is expected to nip a possible Pinay boom in the bud.

(No more effectively than the story was nipped in the bud by this sentence.) Or, again, take this "lead" paragraph to a story in the *Washington Post* from Greenville, South Carolina:

> Nearly everything in this sparkling emerald of the New South's diadem spells progress.

Any reader of the American press will know that these are not unfair examples.

A "lead" paragraph is not simply a matter of enticing the reader. Every journalist who has ever struggled with one knows why it can take so much effort. It is as important to him as to the reader. Writing it concentrates the mind wonderfully, forcing him to decide what in the story is important, what he wants to emphasise, and can eventually give shape to the rest of the story as he writes it.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the American journalist, having failed to take a grip on the story in his "lead," lets it wander through columns measureless to man, until it peters out. The shapelessness of most stories in an American newspaper is, perhaps, the most important single factor which contributes to their lack of style. There are ways of getting out of a story, as well as getting into it: the American journalist seems unable to do either well, with the result that his story usually sprawls.

It is this which makes the kind of advice which Theodore M. Bernstein gives in his "Lively, Informal Guide to Better Writing, Emanating from the News Room of the *New York Times*" largely irrelevant.[1] It is not the grammar or syntax of American journalism which makes it so difficult, nor even its general drabness and stolidity. It is a far more serious fault: an intellectual inability, on the part both of reporter and of copy editor, to master a story. What makes the news pages of *The Times* of London and the *Daily Telegraph* so readable is not just the generally lucid and terse writing, but the fact that the stories, as reports of one day's events, have obviously been mastered by correspondent *and* sub-editor (however much the correspondent may sometimes doubt this) *and* foreign news editor. Some process of evaluation (whether one agrees with it or not) has obviously taken place, whereas in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* it sometimes seems as if the stuff has just been shovelled into the paper.

Bernstein, in his book, tries to give the impression that the *New York Times* is fastidiously concerned with good writing:

> LEAVE ALONE. . . . "Leave alone" can and should mean exclusively "cause to be in solitude," and "let alone" can and should mean exclusively "cause to be undisturbed." . . . A "growing language" is a fine thing. But let its extreme advocates be very sure that when changes are accepted the language is really growing and not merely growing obscure.
>
> REMAINS. "An army truck arrived to carry his remains to Kuala Kubu Bahru." "Remains" is an unsavoury word when you stop to think about it. . . . In this story the corpse wasn't yet cold.

This is the governess—I have never had any patience with Fowler, not even the patience to side against him—and it is not a governess that

[1] *Watch That Word* (Herbert Jenkins, London, and Channel Press, New York).

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the *New York Times* needs. Even its style book carries the odour of lavender and old lace:

> *Mr., Mrs., Miss.*... In general, *Mr.* is not used with the full name. It is used in second references to men of good standing. In general again, *Mr.* is not used with the names of persons who have been convicted of crime or who have unsavoury reputations known without question to be deserved.... When it is necessary to refer to a reputable and a disreputable person in close proximity, the discrimination should be avoided by using a pronoun or other identification for one man....
>
> Some youths under 21 get *Mr.*; some do not. The nature of the story is controlling.[8]

Not to have referred to Bernstein, in my second reference above, as Mr. Bernstein becomes, by these standards, libellous. But the remains of Theodore M. Bernstein may be let alone.

THE UNREADABILITY OF so much American journalism is the result of a failure to master a story before writing (or editing) it. Two "lead" paragraphs from British newspapers will illustrate what I mean. The *Daily Express* reporter, Keith Graves, describing the collapse of the oil rig in the North Sea, knew exactly what he was about when he began his story with this sentence:

> Nineteen men with "a good idea of what hell must be like" came back last night and told how the oil rig Sea Gem collapsed in the North Sea.

There could not be a simpler, more terse, beginning—or one that so clearly establishes, in the reporter's as well as the reader's mind, what the story is meant to be about. It is immediately given shape.

There are few more difficult stories to write than those which report scientific gatherings at which very little happens except the reading of academic papers. There is so much to establish at the beginning: the interest, the occasion, the meaning. The New York correspondent of *The Times* of London "led" one such story with this paragraph:

> Who wants to be childless? The American Association for the Advancement of Science, meeting this year in Berkeley, California, opened with the central and appalling question of human ecology—the relation between man and his environment. They cannot be said to have come up with many useful answers. They found plenty of exceptions.

This is deceptively simple. In fact, the information it contains is detailed and complicated—it even includes a definition of ecology—and it is given without fuss, with enough urgency to excite one's interest, and with a promise that one will be guided to some understanding of the day's deliberations.

Both these examples appeared on the same day and, in their different ways, emphasise what I am saying about mastering a story before writing it. I could suggest many reasons why American journalists do not master their stories in the same way: the influence of the schools of journalism; methods of recruitment and promotion on American newspapers; the fact that it is almost impossible for an American reporter to "imagine" or "see" the shape of his story in the grey wastes of his paper's news pages; his awareness that, inside the office, there is the copy editor, a far more powerful being than the British sub-editor, justifying his existence. It is even tempting to offer large explanations: the poor general (early) education in most American schools; the lack of the strong sense of a world of letters, of which journalism is a part, however lowly, which still exists in Britain; even the lack of the "lively" intellectual atmosphere which Dwight Macdonald noted in London (although a Londoner may think that he exaggerates its attractions).[9] But any such explanations, if I offered them, would be merely guesses. As I said at the beginning, the phenomenon I have been discussing still mystifies me.

BUT I MUST END with a qualification. I am not at all sure how much emphasis should be put on readability. My British upbringing has made me put it second among the qualities I seek in a good newspaper: I would certainly claim that it is worth taking into account more than American journalists seem willing (or able) to do. The craft of journalism is, after all, the craft of words. But, immediately I have written that, my doubts begin again. It is much more than that, and perhaps even not primarily that. The most one can sensibly do is divide the judgment: British journalism is too often in danger of sacrificing substance to a phrase; for want of a phrase, American journalism is always in danger of sacrificing substance to unreadability.

Editorial Opinion

I HAVE suggested that this should be articulate, and be based on intelligible attitudes. Generalisation is impossible here, so I will deal with each newspaper individually.

[8] *The New York Times Style Book for Writers and Editors* (McGraw-Hill, New York), pp. 63–64.

[9] "An American living in London is delighted by the wide interest in art and letters, the liveliness of the intellectual atmosphere, the sense he gets constantly from the press and from conversations of a general interest in what he is interested in.... Most educated Englishmen seem to take an interest in cultural matters as a matter of course." "Masscult & Midcult," in *Against the American Grain* (Vintage Books, New York), pp. 64–65.

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The Times. Exactly how wrong an outsider can be about *The Times* was demonstrated by George Lichtheim's remarks, in *Commentary*:

> To become a leader-writer on the London *Times* one needs more than political acumen and a decent social background. Even a classical education and an Oxford "first" are not enough. There is a special flavour to its writing ultimately traceable to the distilled essence of 300 years of High Church Anglicanism.

I was the political leader-writer of *The Times* for almost four years. Political acumen? That's not for me to judge. A decent social background? I don't think either my father or my mother would have made much play with that claim. A classical education? I read modern history. A "first" at Oxford? I got a "second" and, on hearing that I had achieved even that, my tutor said that henceforth he would cease to have any faith in the Oxford examination system. The distilled essence of 300 years of High Church Anglicanism? I was brought up in the fold of the Presbyterian Church of England.

I think it is important to expose Lichtheim's imagery in this way. In his personal testament about the collapse of France, Marc Bloch refers at one point to "the High Command." He immediately corrects himself. He had spent his whole life as a historian, he says, avoiding such high-flown abstractions as "the High Command"—which is really no more than a number of individuals; and we should be equally careful to avoid the kind of abstraction which critics like Lichtheim mean by *"The Times."*

The Times changed greatly even while I was there,[10] as a result of W. F. Casey's replacement by William Haley. Today, at their best—which usually means when Haley has written them himself—the leading articles in *The Times* are perhaps the most articulate editorialising in either country. They have a primitive force, which sweeps one through them, even when one disagrees with what they say, and leaves one feeling six inches taller: an eminent Victorian, at least. Apart, however, from a sneaking desire always to be on the side of what it regards as "the movement" or "the tide" of History, its attitudes have ceased to be consistent, and therefore ceased to be intelligible. As far as I can determine, they can be reduced to these awkward propositions:

(*1*) That Britain has, and should have, a powerful voice in the world, *but* should not over-exert itself in the matter of arms, or be over-eager to make entangling alliances, *e.g.*, in Europe;

(*2*) that the people of Britain should be guided by the morality of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help, but* should disdain the economic policies which would sustain such a morality;

(*3*) that the party in power—no matter which—should act boldly, even dramatically, in pursuing necessary policies, *but* should contrive, none the less, to maintain a national unity or consensus.

Within this convenient framework, in which theory need never be related to practice, the leader-writers of *The Times* can preach to their heart's content, while the world goes on spinning on its axis, not heeding very much.

New York Times. No other of the newspapers I am discussing labours so prodigiously, or so unsuccessfully, to make clear what it is trying to say. Apart from James Reston, its editorial page is the most unintelligible in either country. Sift and sort as one does, one still cannot find where it regards the sticking-point in, say, Viet Nam, to be; or whether it is ultimately in favour of cheap money or dearer money; and so on and so on, through almost every issue. Yet the prestige of its editorial page is such that it is believed abroad (as it used to be believed of *The Times* of London) that it speaks for an important and influential section of American "opinion." Throughout last summer, while I was in America, the opposition inside the United States to the administration's policy in Viet Nam was consistently exaggerated abroad. This exaggeration was the result, partly of the sudden prominence given to the "teach-ins," but primarily of the attention which is paid to the opinions of Walter Lippmann (which is understandable, even creditable) and to the editorial opinion of the *New York Times*, which is the opinion only of its strangely constructed editorial board.

If the weakness of the news coverage of the *New York Times* is a matter largely of style and language—these determining what one American editor has described to me as "its mediocrity and deeper uselessness"—the weakness of its editorial opinion is a matter of complete absence of serious conviction. It cannot even speak clearly on important issues arising in its own state of New York. At a critical point in the reapportionment struggle in New York state last year, it concluded a mystifying editorial with this paragraph:

> It is clear that the supremacy of the Federal Constitution must be upheld. States cannot be permitted to operate indefinitely with an unconstitutionally apportioned legislature merely

[10] See my article on *The Times* in ENCOUNTER, "A Dying Profession" (January 1961).

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> because the legislature itself has failed to take the necessary corrective action. But this does not wipe out the anomaly of a Federal court forcing a state to hold an election that will be illegal under the terms of its own constitution.

I challenge anyone—including the editorial board of the *New York Times* itself—to unravel, from these sentences, any clear statement of what the *New York Times* imagines the Constitution of the United States to be, and where (if, indeed anywhere) it regards its legitimacy to lie.

Again, intrusions on civil liberties are a matter of growing concern to most thinking people in America. But here is the *New York Times* ending an editorial about the use of personality tests in the hiring of civil service employees:

> There is no need, therefore, to forgo testing in its entirety or to treat psychology as though it were a form of voodoo. And we are confident that the excesses uncovered by Mr. Gallagher can be corrected without the constitutional amendment which he somewhat sensationally suggested. Perhaps the problem can be brought into clearer focus by the hearings currently being conducted by the Senate Sub-committee on Constitutional Rights.

I do not know which of the key words and phrases are more revealing: "in its entirety" (a world of compromise is conveniently made available there); "a form of voodoo" (an illiterate phrase, concealing mediocre attitudes, and sliding over the serious points which are at issue); "the excesses" (what comfort there is in that casual brushing aside); "somewhat sensationally suggested" (the disdainful sniff could not be more audible); "clearer focus" (as if any clearer focus is needed than the individual examples which it has already cavalierly dismissed as "excesses"); and the final looking to a Senate Sub-committee.

I hope, should the occasion ever arise, that the defence of my civil liberties will be in more vigorous and certain hands than those of the editorial board of the *New York Times*.

Daily Telegraph. The very much improved leading articles in the *Daily Telegraph* may not be the result of Colin Welch's appointment as deputy editor, but the improvement seems to have coincided with it. Their definite intellectual attitudes are still sometimes disappointingly muted; but they can no longer be accused of following the line set by Conservative Central Office and—much more important—they are increasingly informed by a whole political attitude. Of the *general* newspapers I am discussing, the *Daily Telegraph* is the only one, on either side of the Atlantic, which argues a conservative case consistently and intelligently.

New York Herald Tribune. This should be the equivalent of the *Daily Telegraph* in the United States. It is not. The lack of sophistication and the lack of care for serious or sustained argument have made its editorials barely worth reading, except to while away a delayed "shuttle" flight from New York to Washington. In its editorials (as in almost every other important part of the paper, except its sports pages, Eugenia Sheppard, and its team of columnists, the *Herald Tribune* has, to all intents and purposes, abdicated.

The Guardian. It provides no pleasure to dismiss the *Guardian* in almost exactly the same terms; but it must be done. It has almost ceased to function as a newspaper altogether. Its news coverage, foreign and domestic, is spasmodic and never complete; its comment is always unexhilarating, and normally unilluminating; its feature pages are an acknowledged disaster; if it has a first-class critic, such as Philip Hope-Wallace, it more often than not reduces his contribution to insignificance; its writing, generally, is arch when it is not simply incompetent. It is without form, without substance, and without purpose: a disgrace to radical journalism.

Washington Post. In spite of all its defects, this seems to me the most promising major newspaper in the eastern United States: it should certainly, by now, have replaced, in reputation, the faltering *Baltimore Sun*. Its editorial comment needs more "edge"—but it is already consistent, forthright, articulate and intelligent. In domestic policy, it stands firmly to the left-of-centre of the present Democratic Party; and, although I personally disagree with many of its attitudes, it appears to me always to offer the clearest rational defence of them that is possible. In foreign policy—although it might not accept this description—it feels its way patiently to a recognisable and intelligible "liberal-imperialist" stance. It is one of the few important newspapers in the United States which is not frightened of the power which America now holds, but continues to examine every exercise of it.

Outside these two major fields, it is an indefatigable guardian of civil liberties (an important role to fill in Washington's own newspaper), and is not afraid to weary its readers by returning to their defence, again and again. Here is how it began an editorial on telephone tapping:

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> It is dismaying but not surprising to learn that Federal law enforcement officials have resorted to telephone wiretapping, hidden microphones and two-way mirrors in investigating suspected tax frauds.

And here is how it ended it:

> We believe it to be perfectly plain that, whenever the FBI does this, it is guilty of law-breaking. And we believe it to be equally plain that, whenever the Attorney-General authorises or condones or winks at the practice, he connives at law-breaking. And, finally, we believe that this contempt for law on the part of the highest officials in the United States Government responsible for law enforcement inevitably breeds a corresponding contempt for law on the part of Inland Revenue investigators and on the part of municipal police forces all over the country.

That—contrast it with the *New York Times* on psychological tests—is what I call an editorial. Like all true radical newspapers, the *Washington Post* is not afraid of a crusade. For months now, week in and week out, sometimes day in and day out, it has waged a campaign against the unrestricted sale of firearms. It has hammered away at this evil with conviction and fervour; and, if their sale is ever restricted, much of the credit will be due to the *Washington Post*.

Wall Street Journal. Editorial comment is the second of the fields in which the *Wall Street Journal* excels. It is a great deal more doctrinaire than the *Financial Times* in its defence of the private enterprise system, and of "right-wing" policies generally. This makes its comments controversial, but it also makes them intellectually stimulating. (At their most controversial, they are precisely what those of the *Daily Telegraph* are not: "Peter Simple" transferred, lock, stock, and barrel, to become the voice of the paper.) Of all the newspapers, American and British, which I am discussing, the *Wall Street Journal* is the only one which, with intelligence, polemic, candour and wit, continually questions the way in which the world is going. In this respect, it is perhaps something like the old *Morning Post* in Britain. If other newspapers like to "side with history," the *Wall Street Journal* impudently, but intelligently, challenges it.

The lesson, I believe, is one of general application. Newspapers cannot be really forceful, cannot even be really illuminating, in their editorial comment if they lack intellectual conviction and passion, if they are content (as most of them are) simply to differ a little, while swimming along in the "mainstream." Nor is this a matter of right-wing conviction alone. In Britain, for example, the *Guardian*—and, for that matter, the new *New Statesman*—show what happens to editorial political comment when it has no firm intellectual attitude to support it.

I will recall only two characteristic editorials, appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* within four days of each other. The first was entitled "The Decline of Liberalism": a healthy, inviting banner. The whole of it was a splendid piece of sustained intellectual polemic, from the challenging opening paragraph—

> Even amid the rush of the most "liberal" legislation in a generation, some liberals themselves fear that the movement is running out of intellectual steam. They also suspect they know part of the reason. Liberalism, as it has evolved in 20th-Century America is essentially a creed of materialism. . . .

—to its final fling—

> Whatever is done about it, the vacuum waits to be filled. In the ledgers of the spirit, contemporary liberalism is running a continuing and growing deficit.

The second editorial was, again characteristically, entitled, "New Excuses for Socialism." It challenged a professor in the University of California who had said that American society was now "socially (some would say socialistically) oriented," and necessarily so. Its final dismissal was wholly in its usual manner:

> Mr. Reagan remarks that Thomas Jefferson did not have to face the kind of economic and social problems we have today. Very well; but Thomas Jefferson knew a tyranny when he saw one, and more to the point he knew what circumstances conspire to bring about a tyranny. Perhaps the regimentation evolving in this country will be of a relatively benevolent type, but it is nonetheless regimentation the nation is inviting And it is, if we may say so, a mischievous interpretation of both the past and the present to contend that economic progress requires socialism or any other brand of despotism.

It may be a personal taste, but I cannot help thinking that it is a tragedy that this kind of fundamental argument—polemic—has almost disappeared from British editorials, and is confined to "Peter Simple," on the one hand, and *Tribune*, on the other.

Financial Times. Intelligent and informed although the editorial comment in the *Financial Times* is, it lacks the bite and stimulation of the *Wall Street Journal* precisely because, if it does not altogether "side with history," it does not set itself against it. The *Financial Times* has no obvious ethos, no easily apparent economic doctrine, no pervading political philosophy.

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It is characteristic that these are to be found, not in its editorials, but in the signed articles by Harold Wincott—as if they were slightly disreputable.

In spite of the "consensus" which President Johnson is said to have established, the habits of mind of "consensus" are far more apparent in the editorial comment of the British than the American press. This is not a question of disagreement about particular policies: there is plenty of that in both countries. But, in Britain, the disagreements take place within a framework of fundamental acceptance of the way things should go—or, at least, are going. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times* mutter, sometimes lowly, sometimes darkly. But a regular reading of the serious newspapers in Britain never leaves the impression of fundamental issues still unresolved. In contrast, as I have said, the American press reflects a society in which first principles are still actively open to dispute. Which condition is preferable is not the point here. But there is no question which makes the most stimulating journalism.

Independent Comment

Political comment opposed to the editorial policy of the paper is not encouraged (except fitfully) by British newspaper proprietors. The phenomenon of the American syndicated columnist has therefore to be considered apart.

> It took the Depression, with its uncertainties, its disillusionment, and its cynicism towards conventional news sources, to bring the Golden Age of the columnists. Close to two hundred of them sprang into existence between 1930 and 1934. Many disappeared as rapidly as they came, but others survived and flourished. Approximately fifty syndicated columnists, it is estimated, earn a regular livelihood in Washington. Far fewer have national prominence.[11]

So it may have been; so, indeed, it may still be. But, to a British political journalist encountering Washington for the first time, the astonishing fact is how slight the phenomenon of the political columnist really is. In the first place, very few of the columnists whom it is valuable and instructive to read regularly are young. There is Joseph Kraft; there is the team of Rowland Evans and Robert Novak; there is, if one wishes to take him more seriously than one suspects he takes himself, William F. Buckley, Jr. But they do not exhaust the fingers of one hand. With the rest, one is back in another generation: Walter Lippmann, James Reston, Joseph Alsop, Marquis Childs, David Lawrence, Drew Pearson....

One is tempted, in fact, to ask whether the political column in America has not been a much exaggerated phenomenon—although it can hardly be exaggerated as a business adventure—and is not now a dying one. The success of Evans and Novak is, in this respect, interesting. They are not primarily columnists of opinion: they are pre-eminently reporters. They can—one suspects it is usually Novak—sometimes display very strong opinions: all through last summer, for example, they hammered away at the "evil influences" which they detected in SNCC (the civil rights Students National Coordinating Committee). But, as in this case, their opinions arise out of their reporting, and their column (always brightened by hints of private information) is a reporter's column—more, even, than Alsop's ever was.

It would be an engaging, perhaps even a worthwhile, task to dissect every columnist, but the important general points about them can best be made by contrasting the oldest of them, Walter Lippmann, and the most recent recruit to the ranks of the serious syndicated columnists and Lippmann's only visible successor, Joseph Kraft. They are both sufficiently alike to make their differences interesting.

Lippmann, at 78, is of course a phenomenon himself. He has been writing since 1910, and, to a political journalist of only 41, he is an intimidating example. (He is not, by a long chalk, an intimidating person.) He has always been a man of certainties, even when (as he has often done) he has been changing his opinions and attitudes. His dominating interest is not in politics or diplomacy, as such, but in the national interest which he believes politics and diplomacy should serve. The political column, in his hands, has been the expression of whatever has been his current teleology. It is this which has always given it such breathtaking sweep, and even majesty.

But no political columnist in the future is likely to risk such certainties. Joseph Kraft in fact made this point when discussing the Washington press corps. Three factors, he wrote, have caused a "Copernican revolution" in the field of public affairs:

> For one thing, science has entered the field... in a big way. Technical information, unintelligible to most of us and well understood by only a few, underlies many of the basic choices in government....
>
> Secondly, crowds have replaced individuals as the principal actors on the world stage....
>
> Thirdly, the stage of public affairs has become as extended as it has become crowded...
>
> (*Harper's*, June 1965.)

[11] Douglass Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government* (Vintage Books, New York), pp. 96–97.

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"To apply commonsense to what is visible on the surface," he concluded, "is to be almost always wrong; it produces about as good an idea of how the world goes round as that afforded by the Ptolemaic system."

I think Kraft makes too much of the "revolution"—it is impossible, after all, to read Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* without wondering at how little the exercise of power ever changes—but his points are important ones, and every serious political journalist is aware of them. The result is evident in Kraft's own column. Although he is a man of definite opinions, which he can express with considerable acerbity, the real mark of his column is his interest in politics and diplomacy, as such.

It is the machinery, and the men who work it, which he looks at: he is brilliant at analysing the life of institutions, and it is from his enthusiastic study of them, of the political process itself, that his own opinions draw their strength and verve.

Lippmann has always written from the bridge; Kraft is usually down in the engine-room, observing the laws of political dynamics, and not unwilling to pass a comment or two, in passing, on the competence of the chief engineer and even the stoker. The difference in their approaches, as Kraft says, reflects the changed times as much as anything else. But without one or other of these approaches, the political column today has no real existence, apart from the reporting of Evans and Novak, or the higher gossip which Anthony Howard used to offer in the *New Statesman*.

The America which needed—if that is the word—Westbrook Pegler and Drew Pearson has passed. Alsop seems more and more out of touch, even in the field of military strategy, where he once excelled, and resorts, in moments of strain, to abuse of his journalistic colleagues ("Nevertheless, guff rises round us like a horrid tide...."). Reston—dreamy Reston—concerns himself more and more with the eternal verities and, although always to be read with pleasure, and frequently with instruction, it is sometimes difficult to climb on to Olympus with him. Perhaps other Krafts will come, to fill the gaps, but for the moment the genre seems very slight.

Nevertheless, the tradition of independent and authoritative and *untouched* political comment which has been built up since the 1930s is one which a British political journalist can only envy—and hope that it survives.

Entertainment

BRITISH NEWSPAPERS are notably more entertaining than their American counterparts. This is the result partly of a much greater flexibility in the choice of news stories, a far less strict commitment to politics, either domestic or foreign; partly of a greater willingness to find copy—especially feature copy—in the margins of life; partly of a natural British talent for personal polemic, tipping over sometimes into bitchiness; and partly of a much greater attention to arts and letters, which are only spasmodically given any prominence in the main news pages of the American press. British newspapers see life a great deal more "whole" than American newspapers, if they do not, by and large, see it as steadily.

It is also partly a result of the inability of the British journalist to take himself as seriously as does the American. Listen to Douglass Cater, formerly a Washington correspondent, now a special assistant in the White House:

> The myth of the swashbuckling, free-wheeling, heavy-drinking general reporter who pursues news with a hunch and a hangover dies hard. It is nourished in the literature of the profession, and in the tall tales swapped around the National Press Club bar. But a look at the Press Club... soon dispels the myth. Except for the newspaper mats plastered along the entrance hall, it might be almost any big city eating club, its members as staid and undistinctive. Its consumption at the bar is certainly no heavier than most.

Staid? undistinctive? They are curious boasts. Or listen, again, to Bernard C. Cohen, in his laborious book, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1963):

> If the old image of the reporter as a heavy-drinking, hard-bitten cynic, interested only in sensational scoops, still persists in some realms, it has no place here. The foreign affairs specialist among the Washington correspondents is a cosmopolitan among cosmopolitans, a man in grey flannel who ranks very high in the hierarchy of reporters.

Or, yet again, Joseph Kraft:

> ...now the average newsman is college-educated, fairly thoughtful, and reasonably well-heeled.

To a British journalist, this self-conscious seriousness about himself would be embarrassing, if not repugnant; and I cannot help feeling that some of it, some of the staidness and un-distinctiveness, pervades American newspapers.

Format and Lay-out

THE "packaging" of British newspapers has gone much too far, and has reached its most absurd in the "art design" creations of the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer*. It seems to me more and more obvious that this is part of a general lowering of standard in "quality" British journalism, as the allegedly serious newspapers hunt, not simply for new

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readers, but for new types of readers. The orthodox explanation of the success of the "quality" Sundays is that the new readers have raised their standards. I think that there is another: that the newspapers are lowering theirs.

The fashionable "art" lay-outs are almost always achieved at the expense of words, a curious achievement for a journalist to applaud. These lay-outs in turn impose a formula on the kind of piece which can be printed: the "INSIGHT" type of journalism drops naturally into place, as does the endless serialisation of a hundred-and-one Edwardian nights. The formula itself in turn demands a kind of writing which, at its most successful, avoids prose. (One editor of a "quality" Sunday newspaper recently told one of his writers that it was his ambition to get away from what he termed "consecutive prose" in his newspaper: the writer to whom he addressed the remark just bit back his words before asking if what he wanted was incoherent sentences.) In comparison, I find it a great stimulation to open a serious American newspaper, and find it so full of words. I will agree —I have already agreed—that they sometimes go to unnecessary lengths to make themselves unreadable and unattractive, but their priorities seem right.

WITH THIS, one returns to the theme which has pushed itself, willy-nilly, into every corner of this article: the emphasis, in American newspapers, on content; the emphasis, in British newspapers, on presentation and readability. Here and there, in both countries, the two are miraculously reconciled. But, by and large, their newspapers seem to reflect the countries themselves: one earnestly involved in the business of power, the other resigned to watching from the sidelines.

Henry Fairlie

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Letter from Saigon

An American Tragedy

IN A CONFUSED WORLD, war makes for clear divisions—friend or enemy, ours or theirs, good or bad—and we need look no further to explain its popularity. War divides, and that is its charm. True, it divides irrationally, for not all the goodies are on our side, and not all the baddies are on theirs. But how convenient, in a world where good and bad mingle so inextricably and so disobligingly, to have such divisions! How satisfying in war—and how unlike peace!—to be able to identify the enemy, to search, kill, and destroy. War, for all its cruelties, is a moralist's delight. What does it matter who casts the first stone, so long as we cast the last—as the Anglo-Saxons have a habit of doing. Peace, for all its pleasures, offers no such absolute opportunities.

But the point about Viet Nam is that none of this applies. This at least is a war that makes nobody happy—perhaps not even the Viet Cong, who can hardly have wished to pay so steep a price for political control. For here, in Saigon, war has lost its simplifying power. Here, war does not reduce the confusions of the world, it compounds them. Where is the enemy? Here, there, and nowhere. The enemy may be the wispily-bearded peasant in his conical hat, up from the country with a load of *plastique* under his vegetables. Or the *petite*, serenely-smiling *Vietnamoise*, perched on her boy-friend's scooter, running errands for the Viet Cong. "Will you visit the front?" ask anxious friends, before you leave for Saigon. Alas, there is no front—how the soldiers wish there were! And this, too, is part of the psychology of Saigon. It grips the press corps—said to be over 300 strong—as firmly as the combat G.I. Get where the action is! Obligingly, the U.S. Army lays on "choppers," jet transport, voluminous briefings. Never, one feels, has a press corps been so royally provided for, and never has it known less of the country it is covering.

Not, surely, for lack of trying. But how do you penetrate a country—few correspondents speak either French or Vietnamese—whose natural reserve has been stiffened by years of terror, propaganda, and social disruption? The Vietnamese, contrary to what too many Westerners suppose, are not a primitive people: highly intelligent and sophisticated, they are held to be even more industrious than the Chinese. But they are introverts by nature; they would be hard people to know at the best of times—which this, admittedly, is not. Not surprisingly, then, the average correspondent is seldom tempted to write about the Vietnamese and their political doings (most seem to have been as much taken by surprise by the Buddhist riots as the U.S. authorities themselves). The journalist files, often at great personal risk, tales of combat with the Marines or the First Air Cavalry. It is these, he has found, that go down best with Headquarters and also with the reader back home. That the real action may not be where the Army or the Air Force would like it to be has been emphasised by recent events. But, in lieu of hard information the nostalgia for action, for combat, for a clear dividing line, prevails.

THIS UNEASE, THIS CONFUSION, is no doubt characteristic of cities in the grip of guerilla warfare. In Algiers, too, there must have been this eerie combination of the absurd and the habitual, the casual gesture that is no more than it seems, and the gesture that unsheathes the knife or tosses the hand grenade. After all, the girl on the scooter may be no more than than a girl on a scooter, and the peasant may be no more than a peasant. But the barbed wire and high fencing that surround the shops and hotels, the watchfully-guarded, sand-bagged emplacements outside government buildings and army billets, tell a different story. Whatever figures the authorities may hand down for the areas "Under Government Control"—and they have been so vague and mutually contradictory as to invite universal derision—the fact is that the front line runs through Saigon itself. It may be true that there is now no part of Viet Nam immune from U.S. air action. But it is also true that there is now no part of Viet Nam that can, with any confidence, be classified as "secure." How else could U.S. bases be mortared at short range by Viet Cong guerillas? This does not mean, needless to say, that the Viet Cong has "control" of the country either. Rather, control of the country has become as much a temporal as a spatial concept. By day the U.S. Air Force, and to a lesser extent South Vietnamese and U.S. ground forces, may be said to be in control of large tracts of Viet Nam. But at night these same tracts are most certainly under Viet Cong control. The only meaningful boundaries in Viet Nam, one is tempted to say, are those between day and night.

ON REFLECTION, then, the comparison with Algiers does not wash. The Algerian

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situation was altogether more clear-cut. The bicycling *Algérienne* and the Casbah barrow-boy might be working for the F.L.N. But that, at least, was a commitment the patriotic Frenchman could grasp—a dozen years earlier, as a *résistant,* he might have been in a similar situation. And indeed, when the parallel was finally grasped, it did prove surprisingly easy for Frenchmen to accept its implications. But even the most committed critic of U.S. policy in Viet Nam would find it hard to make the comparison stick. Say what you will of General Westmoreland, he is not like General Jacques Massu. That torture is employed by the government forces, as by the Viet Cong, is undeniable. But it is inconceivable that Massu's 1957 "clean-up" of Algiers could be carried out in any Vietnamese city—the American press would be on to it like tigers.

Again, in a recent incident, teenage demonstrators surrounded a radio station. The police, mindful of their American training in civic responsibility, called up the Commandant for further orders. "Don't let 'em in, you idiots!" the General bellowed. "May we have that in writing, sir?" The General's response is not recorded, but it is not likely to have been printable. In the upshot, the problem was resolved by agreeing to *tape-record* the Commandant's order; and the demonstrators were duly held at bay. One cannot imagine that this problem, so delicately resolved, would have been a problem under a French administration. If America fails in Viet Nam, she will owe it to her virtues as well as her errors.

WHICH IS WHY Viet Nam has the makings of a specifically American, as well as a Western and an Asian, tragedy. Indeed, at the risk of being charged with false objectivity—though I must plead, in extenuation, that my arrival in Saigon coincided with the peak of the Buddhist demonstrations, and that even so non-lethal a discharge as a volley of small rocks on the roof of one's car can disturb one's objectivity—I would argue that the nature of this shaping tragedy requires to be understood, regardless of one's attitude to the Administration's policies. Some of the Americans I met who were most critical of the Administration's follies were also the most "hawkish," the most committed to the necessity of a U.S. presence. Their criticisms were more violent, more perceptive, more informed—and certainly not less humane—than most I have heard from out-and-out critics of the Administration.

An American tragedy! It would be tedious to detail the items of self-reproach to be heard in Saigon today (though it must be said that if Americans have been uniquely misguided in their relations with Asia, they are certainly uniquely candid in admitting it). The self-criticisms I heard seem divisible into two categories: the mistakes that spring from American insensitivity or inexperience, and the mistakes that are properly inherent in the situation. It is to the former that Americans, in my view, should address themselves first—since they are more easily remediable—though it is the latter that are the more fundamental, and that must be grasped and overcome if future humiliations are to be avoided.

What then, according to Americans themselves, have been their country's chief mistakes? They spring, at bottom, from a refusal to enter into the psychological and social complexity of the Vietnamese situation. Thus, to argue (with *Time* magazine) that South Viet Nam is a country that the U.S. ought to "help towards nationhood," or assist to "find its national identity," is by any standard a poor starting position. The Vietnamese have a national history that goes back to the third century B.C. They may lack political stability, but they do not lack a sense of nationality. They do not need American assistance in building up their "national identity"—indeed, a cynic might say that it is rather America's national identity that is at stake in this war. The drive and endurance of the Viet Minh, and now of the Viet Cong, are probably without their equal in the world—they have put up an effort superior even to that of the Algerians, as U.S. military men willingly admit. This obvious admiration of the man on the spot for the fighting qualities of the Viet Cong contrasts strangely with his apparent readiness to believe implicitly in the "demoralising effects" of U.S. bombing on guerilla morale. I have even read a report in which it is stated that bombing, by preventing the Viet Cong from cooking hot meals at night, is undermining their will to fight. One cannot help suspecting that what persuades the Pentagon does not persuade the man on the spot.

BUT THIS FAILURE to appreciate the extraordinary (if exasperating) qualities of the people with whom one is dealing is only the beginning. The truth is that too many of America's admirable qualities work to her discredit in an Asian environment. Take, for example, the time-sense native to most Americans. It is impressive, of course, that America can build up vast air bases and harbour complexes from mud and sand in a matter of months. But do Asians see it like that? If America can move in and build up her bases so quickly, with such conspicuous wastage, might she not also withdraw with equal alacrity? What guarantee

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is there that America will be around, not just for seven months or seven years, but for as long, say, as the Chinese? The very haste of the American build-up, then, could be a disturbing factor, as is most certainly the American desire for visible results in the shortest possible time. Little as one may have faith in the old cliché of Western materialism and Eastern spirituality, there is no doubt that Asians are less impressed by American technology than Americans themselves. America's problem is to convince the Vietnamese, and Asians generally, that she will be there for as long as she is needed. If I were an Asian, I should not feel much confidence, reading the American press, in America's determination to extend that degree of protection. I have suggested that certain errors are inherent in the situation, while others may be avoidable. I would argue that the anti-Americanism aroused by the presence of a huge American army is natural and unavoidable: it is something America must live with. But the mental time-scale with which Americans approach Asian problems is not something unalterable. It should not be impossible for official Washington and Saigon to realise that short-range planning is likely to be self-defeating. America will have to learn that impatience is not always a virtue—indeed, that against an opponent endowed with the patience traditional to Asia it is a certain formula for defeat.

HOWEVER one looks at it, the issues in Viet Nam must seem painfully vague. Personally, I care as little for the argument that all the troubles of South Viet Nam can be put down to "North Vietnamese aggression" as for the argument that the Viet Cong (on the analogy of the F.L.N.) is the embodiment of Vietnamese national aspirations. The Viet Cong, undeniably, is the strongest organised indigenous power in the country. But that it must resort increasingly to terror (as defectors' evidence shows) to impose its will suggests that it is not quite the fish-in-water that, according to Maoist principles, it ought to be. It is an indigenous force (though one copiously assisted from outside), but it holds no proprietary rights in Vietnamese nationalism. Yet, this said, what other indigenous force exists to oppose it? There is, of course, the Vietnamese army itself, whose fighting role is usually underestimated, or wholly ignored, in the reporting of the war. And, in a situation like the present, this may be a mistake—a mistake that the Buddhists, as their support of General Thi has shown, are not likely to make. In a society far advanced towards political disintegration, the Army may represent a source of authority more effective than its critics allow. But it does not follow that this residual authority can be boosted into a legitimate national authority by what one can only call Madison Avenue statesmanship. In Saigon, few would now disagree that the Honolulu confrontation of President Johnson and Prime Minister Ky was disastrously ill-advised. Not only was Ky's position undermined (what could the man seem but an American puppet after so fulsome an embrace?), but the reputation of America suffered no less (what kind of people must these be who could accept Ky and his colleagues at face-value?). To have undermined the small authority of the Vietnamese government was bad, to undermine that of its American backers worse—to have undermined both was a hardly credible achievement.

Still, none of this establishes the claim of the Viet Cong to be the repository of Vietnamese national aspirations. Indeed, what finally emerged from the Buddhist demonstrations, so ably master-minded by Thich Tri Quang, showed something very different. To dub the Buddhists a "third force" is no doubt an unhelpful cliché—it is not clear, for one thing, whether they can yet be considered a "political force" at all. But if one thing is evident from *Time*'s surprisingly—indeed, alarmingly—positive appraisal (17 April) of Thich Tri Quang, it is that in Tri Quang and his following the outlines of a truly indigenous nationalism have emerged. It goes without saying that this nationalism is anti-American, just as twenty years ago it was anti-French, when the youthful Tri Quang laboured for Ho Chi Minh. Tri Quang, it appears, refuses to speak anything but Vietnamese to foreigners—though he knows both French and English. Significantly, though highly intelligent, he is not a member of that French-educated élite which embraces most of Saigon's military and civilian leaders. That week, *Time*'s cover featured Tri Quang as a wily, scowling foreign-devil-hater, the very embodiment of subliminal Western anxieties about the Yellow Peril. *Time*'s cover-artist had perhaps not got the message—or had he? Was this ogre, slayer of three Vietnamese governments, instigator of a new and viciously anti-American phase of political agitation, also what the West had been looking for all along? Here, in unexpected guise, might be that "indigenous force of national mobilisation" which Richard Lowenthal (ENCOUNTER, January) rightly contends is the "only form of 'matching' Communist political warfare open to the West in the Third World." In the same article Lowenthal deplores "the unfortunate fact that in some countries, including Viet Nam, such forces do not exist." But it would seem now that such forces *have* existed for a long time, if only in potentiality, and that it has required the dual stimulus

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of near-defeat by the Viet Cong, and massive American intervention, to bring them into the open. If we have not seen that potentiality, or even known where to look, that is a measure of our Western failure to come to terms with the political problem of Viet Nam. If the West fails in Viet Nam, it will not be for lack of firepower, it will be for lack of intellectual application and flexibility.

NOT, OF COURSE, that the emergence of this Buddhist "third force" offers a pat solution. Elections will no doubt be held—chimerical as this must seem in the present state of the country—and the dominant group in any constituent assembly is likely to be that of Thich Tri Quang and his Buddhists. What will they do? Will they negotiate with the Communists, and try for a Laos-type neutralism, perhaps under Russo-American guarantee? Or will they take over where Diem and Khanh and Ky left off, and fight the Viet Cong to a stalemate? Clearly, speculation is idle, so long as they behave—as they have behaved up till now—as a wrecking element in Vietnamese society. Nothing is more maddening to the foreign observer—as I found in talking to Buddhist representatives—than the unearthly detachment with which they can speak of peace and goodwill and charity to all men while their countrymen are in the grip of one of the most savage wars of the century. I have listened to Western observers who have concluded that they are at best a claque of pious phrasemakers, at worst a bunch of turbulent, double-tongued Asiatics.

Their attitudes will seem, above all, *irrational*. But are they, in fact, so irrational? If the Buddhists are "irresponsible," could it be because they have been deprived of responsibility, first by the French, then by the Catholic Diem, and lately by the Generals? Among Americans in Saigon there is today a remarkable nostalgia for Diem, who at least represented authority and was certainly—whatever the propaganda made out—no "puppet of the Americans." It is ruefully admitted that America, by first conniving at Diem's murder and then publicly embracing his murderers, lost far more in terms of moral authority than she gained. The point is important: as with Ky, so with Diem, the West must mind its own moral reputation when it takes up—or disposes of—a Third World leader. Despite "anti-Americanism," it is expected of the West that it behave better than its protégés. Indeed, this is really what the anti-Americanism is often about: beneath the natural desire to see the foreign devils go home, there lies an apparently contradictory wish that the foreign devils stay and sort out the mess. (How else can one explain that Saigon students, having passed resolutions deploring American interference, should add as an afterthought the the request that America bomb China?)

Though, in retrospect, Diem may appear to Americans in a rosy light, there is no doubt that to the Buddhists he seems now, as he seemed then, a mere prolongation of the *ancien régime*—Catholic, French, neo-colonialist. And this, surely, was inevitable. Sociologically, both Church and Army were relics of the colonial structure. (The officer corps is still fifty per cent Catholic; at press conferences generals are often at a loss for the correct Vietnamese term—the French is more familiar. Yet Catholics number less than ten per cent of the population.) Yet these were also, precisely because of their role in colonial society, "responsible elements." The Buddhists, by contrast, do represent a wholly indigenous element. They are the bedrock, the grass roots, the people from whom nobody has yet heard. What they have to say will not be pleasant to Western ears. But it is unlikely to bring much comfort to Hanoi or Peking either.

IN THIS light, the "irresponsibility" of the Buddhists seems more natural. Adept at "wrecking"—a deeply Vietnamese political trait, and one they share with the Viet Cong—the Buddhists have so far shown small taste for constructive politics. But then, they have had little incentive either. Will this now change? It is plain from Tri Quang's utterances that we ought to distinguish irresponsibility from unrealism. Tri Quang's behaviour may have been (from the American point of view) destructive and irresponsible; but he is plainly a political realist. Where so little is predictable, perhaps only one thing can be predicted with confidence: Tri Quang and his friends will not, if they gain control, throw away any of the cards they now hold. Among these cards is the American presence in Viet Nam, which if it cannot hope to achieve military victory over the Viet Cong, can most certainly prevent an American Dien Bien Phu. That Tri Quang could wish unilaterally to dispense with American power—whatever his private opinion of foreign devils—must seem highly improbable. Though he may see the American presence as at least as much of a menace to the Vietnamese way of life as the Viet Cong, he must know that the Americans, unlike the Viet Cong, are only too anxious to pack up and go home. Which is perhaps what President Johnson should hint that he might do. The spectacle of Thich Tri Quang imploring the foreign devils to stay would be a sight for sore American eyes.

I have given some emphasis to Tri Quang's realism, and this may prove unrealistic. It may

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well be that the Buddhists overestimate their ability to mobilise civilian backing for a government of their choosing; their mastery of wrecking tactics may now work against them. In power, it is far from certain that they can provide an attractive alternative to the Viet Cong—an alternative that will not be content to rest on passive popular support, but prove capable, if necessary, of persuading the people of Viet Nam to shoulder still further sufferings. Past experience is hardly encouraging. But it remains true—and if Tri Quang is the realist he seems to be, he must know this—that the Viet Cong can only be persuaded that total victory is impossible if it is confronted, both in the military and political field, by irreducible resistance. This surely means that any civilian government will need the American presence, quite as much as the Americans will need the government. Still, America is faced with a problem in political management as difficult as any a great power has ever experienced. A complete take-over—which not a few Americans privately urge—would solve many problems. It would give the U.S. that administrative grip on the country which helped the British win in Malaya; it would vastly improve efficiency and security; and it might be much less unacceptable both to Vietnamese and to world opinion than many people suppose.

But, if I am right, a take-over of this kind would destroy the balance of the equation. If the latest events prove anything, they prove conclusively that Viet Nam is *not* Algeria. There is indeed a third force in the country, which represents the desire of the average Vietnamese to be taken over neither by the Communists nor the Americans. Yet there remains an inherent, and possibly unmanageable contradiction: how can the Americans co-operate with such a government without destroying—as with Diem and Ky—the credibility of both parties? That the Americans will have to put up with much abuse and turn the other cheek seems obvious. But how much punishment of this sort will American public opinion take without undermining President Johnson's waning consensus? That this is America's weak point the Communists are well aware.

Equally crucial, plainly, is the question of management. What America really needs in Saigon is a man of genius: a man, shall we say, combining the qualities of T. E. Lawrence, George F. Kennan, General MacArthur, and Malcolm MacDonald. They have not got such a man in Saigon now—to put it mildly—and no such man is available. If he existed, he would indeed be a rare contradiction: he would have to be, after all, both authoritative and diplomatic, charismatic and unobtrusive, infinitely patient, but also daring to the point of folly.

It will be said that this is to expect the impossible. But the impossible, of course, is what is expected of America. The central weakness of the American posture has been to assume that America's vast power can be easily translated into effective authority in a country like Viet Nam. But it cannot, because America is not a colonial power, and must work within a situation where her best ally is likely to behave as if she were her worst enemy.

It is clear, too, that the analogy with post-war Europe, so popular with U.S. spokesmen, is profoundly mistaken. In Europe, American power could be translated in such a way that it enhanced the self-confidence of those America wished to help. But whether an organism is able to react in this way would seem to depend on internal factors over which America has little control. It seems clear that in most Asian states the application of American power will be—unless great care is taken—counter-productive. In this respect Viet Nam is not untypical: rather it is a microcosm of Asia.

The dual outcome is perplexing, but it is consonant with the psychology of contemporary Asia. The problem—it is very much an open question whether America can master it—is so to apply American power that confidence in an ultimate Viet Cong victory is undermined, while not undermining confidence in the civil authority which is America's indispensable ally. It would no doubt have been all much easier if Viet Nam had remained, like Malaya, on the periphery of America's and the world's attention. Certainly, unless the problem can be put over by the Administration in more sophisticated terms, there is the serious risk that the Administration will find that the popular support on which it could once rely has eroded. What is at issue is the nature of America's involvement in all of Asia. If a way cannot be found to channel American power to those countries that America wishes to protect without undermining their self-confidence, the outlook is bleak. What has happened in Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang could prefigure similar tragedies in the arc of political instability that stretches from Karachi to Tokyo. So far as one can see, little enough thought has been given to the basic problem, which is psychological in nature, rather than economic or military. Is it too much to hope that recent events, after the panic and the understandable anger have subsided, could lead to a new understanding of the paradox of America's power and powerlessness in dealing with the weaker nations of the world?

John Mander

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LETTERS

The Vinland Map

THE CONTROVERSY which has developed in England over the Vinland Map [see the views of G. R. Crone and R. A. Skelton in ENCOUNTER, February and April] appears to this writer to be based on a misconception of what the Vinland Map meant to the scribe who made it and, more importantly, to be based on taking the map out of context with the original manuscript which it illustrates. The fault lies in part with the present writer who should have given more emphasis to the unity of the map and manuscript in the published volume and in part to the subsequent publicity which has naturally emphasised the map while neglecting the manuscript of which it is a part.

The map specifically states on the recto of the first leaf that it illustrates the first, second, and third parts of the *Speculum*. The portion of the *Speculum Historiale* which has survived for us clearly states at the end that it is the third part of the *Speculum*.

The Vinland Map, *The Tartar Relation*, and the lengthy portion of the *Speculum* are all written in the same hand. It is a semi-cursive book hand with individual characteristics which are easily identifiable in the original but which are, at least in part, suppressed by the limitations of photographic reproduction. This type of hand was seldom if ever used by professional scribes but rather by educated individuals writing a manuscript for their own personal future use. The reason is obvious: this type of hand lends itself readily to rapid copying. This is adequately shown in this manuscript. The map is made very carefully; the Vincent is written deliberately with prideful calligraphic exaggerations in the top and bottom lines of many pages which are quite graceful. *The Tartar Relation* is written extremely rapidly with an absence of calligraphic exaggerations as if the scribe had his copy available for only a short time. With these facts in mind one can only conclude that the manuscript was a personal one made by the unknown scribe for his personal use, if made for someone else probably only for his employer. It is certainly not the product of a professional scriptorium.

On this basis what is the Vinland Map? It obviously cannot be a chart. It is simply an illustration in the modern sense, an attempt by the scribe to portray the world as he knew it. Illustration is admittedly unusual in medieval manuscripts but not unknown. The use of illustration to explain and elucidate a text was little used in the Middle Ages. The reasons behind this would require an excursus into the intellectual background of the History of Science. Suffice it to say that the work is an illustration and that the scribe was not a trained cartographer. The first point is shown by the appearance in the legends of the Asiatic portion of facts which are apparent in *The Tartar Relation*. Possibly the lost portion of the manuscript contained a similar story of the Norse activities in the Atlantic. The second point is obvious by looking at the map. On this basis where he obtained his ideas and concepts becomes important rather than how well he illustrated them within his limited capabilities.

What is important about the manuscript is that in 1440 we have the product of a mind interested in world history and what the world was like, writing down for his future reference whatever he could find to enlarge his knowledge of the world. This present writer has spent hours tracing down possible clues to the identity of the scribe (and to where he got his non-cartographic information) without success. We hope that with some lucky find or with some shrewder intuition than his the answers may be forthcoming.

THOMAS E. MARSTON
Curator, Medieval and Renaissance Literature
Yale University Library

Defending Tom Brown

I AM NOT wholly clear as to whether Kenneth Allsop [ENCOUNTER, November] conceived himself to be discussing *Tom Brown's Schooldays* or the public school system as it is today, but his discussion of the book is so unbalanced, his remarks on the system so inadequate, and the standard of intellectual integrity displayed throughout his article so low, that it deserves criticism in either case.

Tom Brown's Schooldays is not one of the major literary landmarks of the 19th century, but I refuse to believe that any book remains continuously in print for a hundred years on the strength of such vices as Mr. Allsop detects in it, and I defy any fair critic to read it without coming to the conclusion that Mr. Allsop's criticisms are at best tendentious and at worst wilfully misleading.

It is true that there was a large slice of the perpetual adolescent in Thomas Hughes. It is true that he shared Charles Kingsley's cult of muscular Christianity and Carlyle's admiration of fighting. It is true also that there is in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* a great deal of sentimentality. These last two characteristics are hardly surprising in an age that was both violent and, as G. M. Young has pointed out, sentimental. Mr. Allsop does not have to like the age, but might modify his attacks on Hughes for sharing its qualities.

But to declare that the three themes of the book are "cruelty, conformity, and homosexuality" is a monstrous travesty. Mr. Allsop's case for the first is made out by a simple and unscrupulous way with his quotations—evident, incidentally, from his comment on the extract from Lord Snow with which he heads his article, in which he falsely implies that Lord Snow's concept of the "two cultures" refers to the gap between public school and non-public school education. He can, however, do much better than this. To support his charge of cruelty, he quotes the following passage—"Learn to box then.... It's the proof of the highest courage, if done from true Christian motives. And if you do fight, fight it out; and don't give in while you can

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stand and see." The wording might perhaps make even the innocent curious as to what those dots conceal. Their curiosity is justified. The last portion of the omitted passage runs—"As to fighting, keep out of it if you can, by all means. When the time comes, if it ever should, that you have to say 'Yes' or 'No' to a challenge to fight, say 'No' if you can—only take care that you make it clear to yourselves why you say 'No.'" It is this *refusal* to fight that Hughes calls "the proof of the highest courage." By a little piece of selective quotation, Mr. Allsop has exactly reversed Hughes' real sentiments—and proceeds to cover up his traces, incidentally, by omitting another embarrassing portion of the quotation without indicating the omission. As originally stated by Hughes, the ethical principle at stake may not be a particularly sophisticated one, but, as far as it goes, it seems to me impeccable.

Mr. Allsop then proceeds to say that, after Tom's "roasting," "the Doctor doesn't investigate the barbecuing of his pupil, presumably believing that every trainee Christian gentleman has to burn a bit." What Hughes in fact implies is that the Doctor did investigate, but was foiled by Tom's refusal to reveal who the bullies were. Hughes does, I think, admire this refusal, an attitude one might well question, but not the one of which Mr. Allsop accuses him. Mr. Allsop's accusation is worse than gratuitous; it is perfectly plain throughout that Hughes has the strongest moral condemnation for the bullying, and for the condition of the School house in which it can happen; and if Mr. Allsop can detect an undertone of sadistic pleasure in Hughes' account of the episode, he has a more sensitive nose for it than I have.

AND SO ON, and so on. There is *some* truth in the charge of conformity, but Mr. Allsop grossly overstates it: Arthur is specifically admired for his *refusal* to conform to prevailing moral standards, and Tom comes round to finding something admirable in Martin's unconventional passion for natural history. In discussing Hughes' social attitudes, Mr. Allsop, by further selective quotation, makes Hughes totally unrecognisable as what he actually was—a Christian Socialist, one of the founders of the Working Men's College, and an important assistant of the trade union movement at a vital stage in its development. As to homosexuality, there is of course homosexuality in the relationship with Arthur in the sense that any sentimental friendship between members of the same sex is homosexual. The sense is not a wholly unimportant one, and the phenomenon is of course common at public schools (as are homosexual relationships in the full sense); but the dominant themes of Tom's relationship with Arthur are, not sex, but sentiment and piety. Again, Mr. Allsop doesn't have to like them, but he equally doesn't have to misrepresent them. I might add that Tom's last match (or Last Match, if Mr. Allsop prefers it that way) is not the final scene of the book, and that Hughes, so far as I know, cared nothing for the British Empire or the means of "staffing" it.

A final neat little piece of sleight-of-hand enables Mr. Allsop to convert all this into a cursory rehash of most of the traditional criticisms of the *existing* public school system. As to this, I do think that public school ideology has gone badly awry, but I'm damned if I'll be found on the same bandwagon as Mr. Allsop. In the present context, it's perhaps enough to say that he might as well condemn contemporary capitalism on the basis of a selective misrepresentation of Samuel Smiles.

A. L. LE QUESNE
University of Sydney

MONSTROUS travesty? Other than by selected illustrations, the only way to demonstrate the pervading dominance of the three qualities which I believe characterise *Tom Brown's Schooldays* would be to reprint the entire text. Therefore dots are necessary—especially when, as in this case, faced with an embarrassment of evidence. May I, further to underline these three points, append just three of many passages originally, for space reasons, reluctantly omitted, and which Mr. Le Quesne has (without the use of dots) judiciously chosen to avoid?

Homosexuality: As I suggested (and as Mr. Le Quesne rather disarmingly concedes after his first yelp of indignation) the whole book creeps with it. So much so, that when Tom later tots up his personal profit and loss account at Rugby, he puts top of the list of achievements that he "had never made up to or been taken up by any big fellow or master."

Conformity: East's confession to Tom, at the end, that he has been miserable for years because he has been out of step: "I never stop the Sacrament. I can see from the Doctor downwards how that tells against me. . . . 'Twas 'because the Doctor liked it'; 'no boy got on who didn't stay the Sacrament'; it was 'the correct thing,' in fact, like having a good hat to wear on Sundays." Tom steers East into acceptance by persuading him to be Confirmed.

Cruelty: On 93 of the 343 pages there are descriptions of flowing blood, torture, flogging, physical injury, bullying or violence of some sort. Usually, but not always, Hughes makes deploring rumbles from the wings, but this doesn't, to my sensitive nose, dispel the sniff of his relish of it all. As for his declared, overt attitude, I will fill in a few of those dots. "Let those young persons whose stomachs are not strong," Hughes starts "The Fight" chapter, "or who think a good set-to with the weapons which God has given us all, an uncivilised, unchristian or ungentlemanly affair, just skip this chapter at once, for it won't be to their taste. . . . It is no good Quakers or any other body of men to uplift their voices against fighting. Human nature is too strong for them. I'm as sorry as any man to see folk fighting the wrong people and the wrong things, but I'd a deal sooner see them doing that, than that they should have no fight in them . . . the cant and twaddle that's talked of boxing and fighting with fists nowadays." Elsewhere, extolling a football game, Hughes addresses the reader: "My dear sir, a battle would look much the same to you, except that the boys would be men, and the balls iron; but a battle would be worth your looking at for all that, and so is a football match."

Finally, I'm not running a bandwagon, but, if I

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were, I would be equally damned relieved that Mr. Le Quesne wasn't climbing aboard, for his quivering passion confirms the suspicions expressed in my article: that *Tom Brown's Schooldays* continues to exercise its sickly spell upon the generations.

KENNETH ALLSOP

Holwell, Herts

All Souls

AS A COLONIAL I am, of course, necessarily ignorant of the nature of the Oxford Colleges, and thus I found the article in your March issue ("Crisis in All Souls," by David Caute) something of a revelation.

Caute's painful apostasy struck me as both fascinating and, if I may say so, funny. Of course I assumed that a college, even an Oxford college, must have *something* to do with education, and the discovery that less than a third of the fellows of All Souls admit any such connection was surprising, while the admission that most of these "academics" were either unable or unwilling to *teach* seemed to border on the ludicrous. Nevertheless, the revelation that seemed most incredible was that this institution, though apparently without public purpose, is exempt from public taxation!

Surely an exclusive club, which fattens on privilege in defiance of the public interest, is an anachronism in modern England? I cannot help thinking, no doubt by Mr. Caute's indirect suggestion, of those arrogant monastic monopolies that Henry VIII (I once thought) destroyed in the sixteenth century.

Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, Illinois — R. A. COLLINS

IN your March issue Mr. David Caute attributes to Mr. John Sparrow a "delightful quip about young fellows giving up All Souls for one body." Since this appears to be the only delightful thing Mr. Caute attributes to the Warden, one is loth to deny it him, but in fact the joke was first made in 1748, when, in the May issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the following epigram was published:

ON A COLLEGE LIFE: BY A FELLOW OF ALL SOULS

So fond am I of a sweet college-life,
I would not change for that sweet thing, a wife.
Prevailing nature his weak mind controuls,
Who for one single body *quits* All Souls.

Perhaps it is not without significance for the future of All Souls that Warden Sparrow should have arrived, by the original functioning of a precellent mind, at a thought first formulated more than two hundred years ago. And incidentally, it is good to know that the zeal for historical accuracy which has led Mr. Caute to break college confidences is more discriminating than fanatical.

London — BEVIS HILLIER

MAY I congratulate Mr. Caute on the closing sentence of his second paragraph. It is pleasant to think of a burgeoning catalyst which makes a College first wrestle, and then go swimming, even if the waters are not deep enough to float a golden whale.

University of Exeter — H. W. STUBBS

Roland Barthes

THE elevation of M. Roland Barthes to the select company of the *Men & Ideas* series comes as a surprise, since the air is still vibrating with M. Raymond Picard's superlative squelch, *Nouvelle critique ou nouvelle imposture* (Paris, J.-J. Pauvert, 1965). Picard's analysis of the "method" practised by Barthes is relevant here:

> "As a rule M. Barthes' assertions fall into two categories. The first (to put it somewhat in his style) are of a vatic prophetic type: devoid of explanatory value, generally obscure, and slightly unusual in form, these oracular deliverances are meant to be accepted by the faithful just as they stand. The others, garnished with reasons and examples, can be subjected to critical examination; but unfortunately on doing so we find that they rest on very wobbly foundations. . . ."

Barthes' 1963 piece in *The Times Literary Supplement* failed to convince me that there is a case for importing his Wonderful Waffling Machine into English-speaking countries. Mr. Turnell's article has done nothing to alter this view.

WAYNE DYNES

London

Howlers

IS THERE such a thing as an inverted, or second degree, howler, meaning taking for a howler what is not really one (p. 93 of your March issue, reporting London newspaper criticisms of recent O-Level examinations in French)? There was a saying before the war: "It must be true because it has been denied by the Quai d'Orsay."

Gâter does not mean spoiling a person only. The basic maxim of the current French Constitution is "*Trop de cuisinières gâtent la sauce*; *il faut avoir un seul Chef*." If you consult the easily accessible *Petit Larousse*—I often thought you ought to keep a copy in your office—you will discover expressions like "*gâte-sauce*," "*le temps se gâte*," "*l'humidité gâte les fruits*." You might also look up "*gâte-papier*." True, "*gâte les gâteaux*" is clumsy; but there are other ways of spoiling cakes than by burning them.

If a handkerchief can be *trempé de larmes*, toast could be *trempé de beurre*. "*Gorgé de beurre*" and, simply, "*beurré*" are not the same; I am often "tipsy," never "dead drunk." A pedant is not necessarily *un académicien*.

E. G. SANDERSLEY

London

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Pornography

MAY I ADD one further observation upon the most revealing discussion in your columns of the role of sex in literature? George Steiner in his reply rightly observes Mr. Girodias' evasion of his argument, and his failure to grasp or to face the problem of personal freedom and privacy.

One passage in Mr. Girodias' answer, however, does seem to throw light on the matter and in fact to substantiate Professor Steiner's thesis. On page 56 [ENCOUNTER, February] he seems to pay lip-service to "the present régime of relative tolerance," and yet in practice to think otherwise. On the grounds that "the family man" must have "plunged into marriage to escape from sex," the argument implies that it is a good and necessary thing that this man should be ridiculed. The premise itself would be hard to prove, but the conclusion seems clearly to contradict the principle of individual freedom. The justification of pornography is that it mocks the "puny efforts" of those who disagree with Mr. Girodias on the desirability of multiple sexual relations, and that it makes these people dissatisfied with their own performance and experience. Mr. Girodias is not satisfied with leaving them in what he regards as the misery of "inadequacy" and "a sexual inferiority complex." Instead he must provide pornography to puncture "the pride and moral comfort of the average suburban husband." Clearly, those who think that "the couple is an adequate and sufficient erotic horizon" need so desperately to be converted to Mr. Girodias' point of view, that invasion of their privacy is not only to be permitted but encouraged. They should not be free to have their inferiority complex.

Mr. Girodias' literature seems in this sense to be no longer art but merely the vehicle of propaganda for a way of life. As such it would appear to be vulnerable to Mr. Jacques Barzun's criticism in *Venus at Large* [ENCOUNTER, March], though with a shift of emphasis. It has become a call for action, a moral exhortation, "and this destroys all chances of imaginative realisation."

T. C. F. STUNT

London

AUTHORS

George Lichtheim, who was a Research Associate at Columbia University in 1964–5, and Visiting Lecturer in Modern European History at Stanford in 1965–6, is the author of *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (Routledge). He has just returned to London....

Nadine Gordimer's story is an extract from her novel, *The Late Bourgeois World*, which will be published shortly by Victor Gollancz, London and Viking Press, New York....

Joseph Frank is an American literary critic. He teaches at Rutgers University in New Jersey, has contributed to *Partisan Review*, and is completing a study of Dostoevsky. His book of essays, *The Widening Gyre*, was published in 1963....

David Sylvester has often written on films for ENCOUNTER ("The Innocence of Marilyn Monroe," May 1955; "The Anglicisation of Outer Space," January 1956, etc.). He is best known as an art critic, and his contributions to these pages include "Kasimir Malevich" (May 1960) and "A Kind of Anarchy" (October 1964)....

A. S. Byatt is the author of two books: *Shadow of a Sun*, a novel which appeared in 1964, and *Degrees of Freedom: The Novels of Iris Murdoch* (1965), both published by Chatto & Windus. She was born in 1936 in Yorkshire; took a First in English in 1957 at Newnham College, Cambridge; is married to an economist at the London School of Economics; has two children....

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ENCOUNTER Magazine is published in London by Encounter Ltd. (25 Haymarket, S.W.1), in association with the International Publishing Corporation (33 Holborn, E.C.1).

ENCOUNTER BOOKS are published in association with Weidenfeld & Nicolson (20 New Bond Street, W.1).

MANUSCRIPTS for ENCOUNTER should be sent to 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope (English stamp) or international reply coupons, otherwise they cannot be returned. For subscription details see page 1.

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TOWER OF BABEL

Eric Rhode

Using the work of eleven major film-makers such as Vigo, Lang, Fellini and Resnais as examples, Eric Rhode — cinema critic for *Encounter* — explores the principal techniques of the cinema and discusses the extraordinary difficulties facing a director who wishes to give a picture of a society as complex as ours. 36s

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Piers Paul Read

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Liddio Cipriani

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